



General Assembly

Sixty-eighth session

5th plenary meeting

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Official Records

President: Mr. Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda)

The meeting was called to order at 9.05 a.m.

Agenda item 111

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/68/1)

The President: In accordance with the decision taken at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 20 September 2013, the General Assembly will hear a presentation by the Secretary-General of his annual report on the work of the Organization, under agenda item 111. I give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: Each year at this time, we come together not to preserve the status quo but to drive our world forward. This is an era of wondrous opportunity. Ours is the first generation that can wipe poverty from the face of the Earth, yet the pressures on people and the planet are building — youth without jobs, a warming climate, unresolved conflicts. Events are moving with the twenty-first century at a speed often outpacing the institutions and systems designed for another age. In streets and squares across the world, people are pressing those in power. They want world leaders to listen. They want to know that we are doing all it takes to secure a life of dignity for all.

For more than a decade, the end of 2015 has been our long horizon. What once seemed a distant moment is now just around the corner. The year 2015 is the year by which we have pledged to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It is the year in which we will adopt a new development agenda. And it is the year the Assembly has agreed to complete a global

agreement on climate change. The year 2015 is an historic opportunity. The MDGs have captured the imagination, generated remarkable gains and beat back doubts about development itself.

Yet on some Goals, we are lagging badly. Inequality is growing. Too many people face exploitation, from fields to the factory floor. While going further, a new development agenda must be as inspiring as the MDGs. It must be universal, with ending poverty as its top priority, sustainable development at its core, and governance as its glue. It must find expression in a single set of goals. There should be no hierarchy among the three dimensions of sustainable development, no deferring the environment or social justice for later, once economic growth is ensured.

The empowerment and rights of women must be at the heart of everything we do. The equation is simple: when girls are healthy and in school, when legal frameworks and financial access support women, when women's lives are free of violence and discrimination, nations thrive. I add my voice to those of leaders who will gather this afternoon to adopt a strong declaration on sexual violence in conflict. Let the twenty-first century be the century of women.

(spoke in French)

Success requires increased efforts on the part of the private sector. Businesses must have elbow room to be able to do what they do best — create jobs and innovate. But they must be ethical and responsible in conducting their activities, doing everything possible to protect the environment.

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At the Global Compact Leaders Summit held last week, thousands of business leaders promised to take additional measures so that their goals are better aligned with the goals of the United Nations. The United Nations must devote more means to working not just with the world of business and finance, but also with civil society and philanthropic organizations.

The effects of climate change threaten everything that development has accomplished. The human and economic consequences, which are becoming more substantial, affect everybody. The poorest and the most vulnerable, who are the first to suffer and pay the highest price, demand greater climate justice. The message from the planet and from scientists is very clear, as we will see again this week when the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change publishes its most recent assessment.

These dangers are accompanied by opportunities to be grasped: changing the way we function, our urban planning, our means of transportation and the way in which our homes and our factories are supplied with energy. The path of low carbon emissions is opening up before us — a path that can lead to the creation of jobs and to an improvement in public health, while allowing us all to protect the environment.

(spoke in English)

To help set us on this course, I invite all here to a climate summit meeting one year from now, September next year, here at the United Nations. I challenge you to bring bold pledges to the summit. Innovate, scale up, cooperate and deliver concrete action that will close the emission gap and put us on track for an ambitious legal agreement through the process of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Let us seize the 2015 challenge — a final push for the MDGs, new directions on energy and climate and an inspiring new development framework. We must leave no one behind.

Now let me turn to the biggest peace and security crisis in the world — the crisis in Syria. Well over 100,000 people have been killed. Well over 7 million people, a third of the total population, have fled their homes. Families are under siege. Cities and towns lie in rubble. The economy is in ruins. Communities once alive with a blend of traditions and faiths have been torn apart. The region is being dangerously destabilized. We have seen the worst chemical weapons attack on civilians in a quarter century. A lost generation of young

people now fills refugee camps. Who among us can say that they and their mothers and fathers are wrong to feel abandoned by the international community? We face a moment of reckoning.

The Syrian Government must fully and quickly honour the obligations it has assumed in acceding to the Chemical Weapons Convention. The international community must bring to justice the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in Syria, a use that has been confirmed unequivocally by the United Nations investigation mission. The international community must also, with equal determination, ensure the safeguarding and destruction of Syria's chemical weapons stockpiles and programmes. But we can hardly be satisfied with destroying chemical weapons while the wider war is still destroying all of Syria. The vast majority of the killing and atrocities have been carried out with conventional weapons.

I appeal to all States to stop fuelling the bloodshed and to end the arms flows to all the parties. I look forward to the imminent adoption of an enforceable and binding Security Council resolution on chemical weapons. That should be followed immediately by humanitarian action. United Nations human rights monitors could play a useful role in reporting and deterring further violations.

I call on the Syrian Government and the opposition to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law. They must lift all obstacles to humanitarian access and end the unconscionable targeting of medical facilities and personnel. They must release the thousands of men, women and children whose detention has no basis in international law. Full accountability for serious international crimes is also vital, either through referral to the International Criminal Court or by other means consistent with international law.

The response to the heinous use of chemical weapons has created diplomatic momentum, the first signs of unity in far too long. Now we must build on that to get the parties to the negotiating table. I have been consistently saying that military victory is an illusion. The only answer is a political settlement. I appeal to the Government of Syria and the opposition, and I appeal to all those in the General Assembly Hall with influence over them, to make the Geneva II conference happen as soon as possible. It is time to end the killing and to reach the peace the Syrian people need and deserve.

Lifting our sights from Syria, we can see tremendous stress and upheaval across the region. Historic transitions have stumbled or slowed. Springs of inspiration are giving way to winters of disillusionment. The challenges are immense: building democracy and pluralistic dialogue, dousing the flames of sectarianism, filling the security vacuum after the iron grip of dictators is gone. But the story is still being written. We must do our utmost to help those reforms succeed. We must seize potential openings and respond to declarations of good will. Each nation will chart its own course. We cannot be complacent where there is backsliding, but must rather insist on respect for universal values, human rights, tolerance and political inclusion. These are the foundations of peace and prosperity.

I welcome the re-engagement of Israelis and Palestinians in direct negotiations and the bold diplomacy that made that possible. If we are serious about achieving a two-State solution, then we must recognize that the window is closing fast. I urge the parties to show leadership and a sense of the long-term interests of their peoples and the region. I am going to convene the Quartet principals meeting later this week in New York to lend our strong support to the ongoing Middle East peace process.

(spoke in French)

Beyond the Middle East and North Africa, I see African countries writing a new chapter in which dynamism goes hand-in-hand with democracy and economic growth that is both sustained and impressive. In Somalia, political progress; in Mali, credible elections; in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, more robust peacekeeping; and for the Great Lakes region, a new framework agreement — these are achievements on which we can build.

However, in the Sahel, abject poverty remains and instability persists. In the Central African Republic, the public order has collapsed. Millions of people have been cut off from all assistance and risk becoming victims of abuse. Yet, like the humanitarian appeal for Syria, our appeal for aid for that country has only generated contributions that are desperately insufficient.

In just the past week, horrific attacks committed in Kenya, in Iraq and in Pakistan again remind us of the amount of harm that terrorists can wreak and the damage they can cause. Throughout the world, we again note that human rights and the rule of law are

the foundations of stability and coexistence. It is time for us to more firmly commit ourselves to international justice and the International Criminal Court.

I would like to launch a particular appeal on behalf of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia. They have achieved significant results, but they constantly face serious financial difficulties that currently threaten to compromise their very existence. The failure of the Chambers would be a tragedy for Cambodians, who have awaited justice for a such a long time. I urge the international community to release the necessary resources to ensure that all the cases can be completed.

(spoke in English)

The inability of Member States and the United Nations to prevent and put a stop to large-scale human rights violations has had disastrous consequences. An internal review of the United Nations action at the end of the war in Sri Lanka identified a systemic failure. Member States did not provide the United Nations system with support to meet the tasks they themselves had set, and the system itself unfortunately did not adapt properly or deliver fully.

In this twentieth anniversary year of the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, we should renew our commitment to the United Nations founding principles. I intend to do more to help Member States reach early consensus to prevent large-scale violations and I am implementing recommendations to ensure that the United Nations system upholds its responsibilities under the Charter.

There will be little peace or enjoyment of human rights unless we confront a world awash in deadly weapons. The past year saw the promising adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty, finally regulating the international transfer of conventional weapons.

But nuclear disarmament is languishing. Deadly weapons are proliferating. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is still not in force. And small arms continue to kill and maim. Meanwhile, at a time of pressing human need, spending on weapons remains absurdly high. Let us get our priorities right and invest in people instead of wasting billions of dollars on deadly weapons.

The leaders gathered here today are here to serve "we the peoples". They can be the ones presiding over an end to poverty, giving voice to the will of the people

and ushering in an era of sustainable development and lasting peace. They can tackle the toughest problems today and by their foresight make a gift to future generations. I urge everyone to embrace the global logic of our times. With our fates ever more entwined, our future must be one of ever-deeper cooperation. In this transformed global landscape, let us find new ways of governing, partnering and problem-solving. Let us empower the United Nations to be more than a first responder or a last resort.

Change is inevitable, but progress is not. Leadership makes the difference. Let us take our cue from Nelson Mandela — frail today, but forever in our awareness as a towering model of integrity and principled action in the pursuit of human dignity. The leaders in their home countries and we assembled here represent a privileged pinnacle. We must prove ourselves fit for purpose. We must listen to the just demands of the world's peoples and hear the call of history. We speak often of hope. Our duty is to turn hope into action, through hard work, commitment, skill and integrity. With passion, but most of all with compassion, we can build the future our peoples want — and that our world needs. I thank everyone here for their leadership and strong commitment. Let us build a better world for all; let us shape a future where everybody can live harmoniously in peace and dignity.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

Agenda item 8

General debate

The President: I will now deliver a statement in my capacity as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session.

It is my special privilege to bid members of the Assembly a warm welcome at the sixty-eighth session. As I do so, I am reminded of the long journey to this point in time — a journey that began nearly six decades ago in my twin-island nation of Antigua and Barbuda, in the Caribbean. There, in a household of seven kids, whose parents never had the opportunity to complete high school and could therefore not provide academic guidance to their offspring, one child — whose paternal grandfather signed his name with an "X" and whose mother was a descendant of slave plantation owners in the sister island of Barbados — was determined to be the first in his family to attend university and seek an

opportunity to make a difference, wherever it might occur.

I am the child of those parents. And as I had an opportunity to recall just yesterday, at the ceremony for the unveiling of the winning design for the permanent memorial to honour victims of the transatlantic slave trade, my ancestral journey began centuries ago, in an era when unspeakable cruelty and man's inhumanity to man were in full bloom and were, in many ways, the currency of the day. And while my recent history has been one filled with tremendous opportunity and challenges, it has, nevertheless, been quite a journey. I therefore stand before the Assembly, deeply humbled and honoured to address this gathering of nations, which is a unique representation and expression of our collective thoughts and actions.

We come from nations big and small — some landlocked and others surrounded by seas; some prosperous and others striving to develop. But we all live in a world where constant change is the norm. In fact, this session convenes in a climate and at a time in history in which the Organization is, itself, in the process of change. I refer not only to physical change, but to the task of crafting a more responsive United Nations, with a new strategic thrust, which will shape global development beyond 2015.

This annual gathering of world leaders and dignitaries should not be seen as just another September routine or tradition; rather, it serves and should serve another larger and better purpose — that of recommitting ourselves and our countries to the noble ideals that lie at the Organization's core.

As we gather here again — this being the first time for many present, including my two sons sitting at the back — in the slightly more modest surroundings that is now our Hall, the world's headlines are filled with reports of war, imminent or impending; civil and sectarian bloodshed and strife between as well as within States; grinding poverty and malnutrition; gender violence; adverse effects of climate change and loss of valuable biodiversity; and struggles of men, women and the young seeking to live in human dignity and peace. Now with clear awareness that the scourge of chemical warfare has been unleashed in Syria, we are, as a community of nations, confronted by an urgent need to address that wrong.

Against that background, we are assembled here, at this session, amidst circumstances that increasingly

cause many to wonder whether the vision of our founding fathers, and mothers, as articulated in the Charter of the United Nations, is achievable or realistic.

Across this world of ours, we see rising ethnic and religious extremism, gender inequities, growing unrest and political tension, and increasing socioeconomic inequalities. We see women dying in childbirth, girl children marrying before the age of 10, and the young who dare not dream of a future because they know all too well there may never be one.

And yet, we gather here today despite the odds that are against us, to give human expression to the hard work it takes to make multilateralism work for the collective benefit of all. Effective multilateralism takes dogged determination and a commitment to negotiating and working cooperatively, especially if the quest is to evolve towards a shared consensus that is both broad and lasting. It also requires frank and unvarnished scrutiny of the work of our Assembly, and it is time for us to concede that our efforts at reforming and revitalizing our Organization need new impetus.

I ask the Assembly to indulge me as someone who is at heart an engineer. It is as if, having set out on a long journey towards an agreed destination, our vehicle has developed engine trouble that slows our progress and prevents us from making good speed towards our destination. We tinker with road maps, plans and directions without consensus on what needs fixing and the best means to fix it. And while we the leaders, as drivers of the vehicle, remain parked some distance from our final destination, debating how best to fix the engine, our passengers, the citizens of the world whom we represent, look on powerless and voiceless, many of them dying of hunger and thirst with no access to food or clean water.

The question before us then is simple. Will we be able to work together and fix our vehicle so that we can progress on the journey to effect real and meaningful change?

I must confess that I see contained within the presidency of the General Assembly a great paradox. The holder of this office is exposed to enormous pressures from various sides on any particular issue relevant to the mandate of the United Nations. He or she must display endless patience; must not be discouraged by others' cynicism; must manifest an unswerving dedication to and belief in the principles and purposes of the Organization; must be strong enough to overcome

setbacks; must empathize with all Members and yet be dispassionate and even-handed, showing no fear or favour to one over the other; and must endlessly improvise as he or she seeks to nudge one side or the other, or preferably both, towards common ground. And yet, the paradox is that the President of the General Assembly is without power to commit Member States to a particular course of action, and must not only remain neutral but must also be seen as such if she or he is to retain any credibility. She or he can do no more than reflect and appeal to States to work together, in the hope that appropriate and requisite international cooperation will be achieved.

Now, having said all of this, I can therefore make an immediate appeal to the Member States to recognize those limitations on the presidency and show kind consideration by working effectively towards our shared agenda.

We have been told by our forebears that, when we are faced with overwhelming odds, it is not our limitations that define us; rather, it is what we do to overcome them. As I said in my June acceptance speech from this very rostrum, coming from a small island developing State I take to heart the oft-repeated maxim that no man or woman is an island. Given the giant tasks ahead of us, we need to rely — indeed, depend — on each other if we are to perform effectively on this shared journey.

Therefore, whenever we see gaps between the vision of the Charter and the realities around us, let the search to bridge them begin with ourselves. Let it begin with an examination by each one of us of the attitudes that we bring to this very forum. Let us remember that no State can abrogate the principles of the Charter without doing serious harm to the fabric of our shared Organization.

As President of the General Assembly, I am prepared to make contributions of good, sound advice and point the Assembly in the direction where I think the balance of the interests of the entire international community lies. But it is the Member States that must do the heavy lifting and commit to working on a shared agenda.

On the issue of our shared agenda, I am pleased to note that recently there have been some encouraging achievements that demonstrate that we know how to make the United Nations work for us as a collective and collaborative Organization. It was little more than five months ago, on 2 April, that, for the first time in

the history of our Organization, its engagement with conventional weapons reached a conclusion with the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty, regulating the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. It is expected that this instrument, which has now been signed by 83 States and ratified by four, will help significantly reduce the murderous and destabilizing effects of the proliferation of such weapons.

Also, I recall with immense satisfaction that in 2000 this very body adopted the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2) and, subsequently, the Millennium Development Goals, which united the international community around an ambitious series of goals for development. More recently, at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio, we resolved to craft a post-2015 development agenda.

Defining our post-2015 development agenda is crucial to the overall work and longer term efficacy of the United Nations, and that is why I have selected as the theme this session, "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage". Under this rubric and to assist Member States in defining the outlines of this new agenda, I have identified three high-level events and three thematic debates, which will be held in the course of the present session. The details of these are already well known and have been previously shared with all Members.

The new development agenda is expected to have poverty eradication as its central and overarching goal, and to address the inseparable link between economic growth, equity and social inclusion, and environmental sustainability. The post-2015 development agenda is envisaged as the most far-reaching endeavour ever undertaken by our Organization in its entire history. Embracing States in all aspects of the sustainable development spectrum, it will completely redefine the concept of development as traditionally understood, rooting it in partnership, cooperation, equity — both social and generational — peace, good governance and economic growth based on environmental sustainability.

As we embark on the sixty-eighth session, on the one hand, we urgently need tangible results and action by the Assembly; on the other hand, we are faced with high levels of pessimism and cynicism that we will not be up to the task and that we lack the effort and discipline to effectively address the world's needs.

Let us prove the naysayers wrong. Let us put our shoulders to the plough and work with one another in a spirit of collaboration. Let us focus on the business ahead, cognizant of the sacred trust that brings us here, committed to the peoples we serve, looking beyond individual and narrow interests and with the resolve to conclude the work that brought us here.

Let us not forget that while we sit in this gathering, there are millions who go to sleep in the dark, hungry and insecure, fearful of what another tomorrow may bring. Let us not be distracted or disturbed by pessimism and polemics. Indeed, I invite all of us to look around and see in our presence here a reaffirmation of our belief in the principles of the Charter and in the value of international cooperation for the common good. Let us not forget the fundamental belief that the ties that bind us are stronger and more enduring than the differences that threaten to keep us apart.

We are assembled here from different States, each with its own particular set of strengths, challenges and needs, and from different regions, cultures and faiths, all sharing the single purpose of helping to ensure that the General Assembly will take us further along the road to creating the kind of world envisioned in our Charter — a world of security, peace, justice, adherence to the rule of law, respect for the planet, tolerance, equal rights for all, social progress and faith in the dignity and worth of the human person. And, recognizing how far we have come, conceding how far there is yet to go, let us recommit to the path of protecting our planet and ensuring peace, prosperity and dignity for all who inhabit it.

Before giving the floor to the first speaker for this morning, I would like to remind members that the list of speakers for the general debate has been established on the agreed basis that statements should be no longer than 15 minutes — myself and the Secretary-General excluded, of course — to enable all the speakers to be heard at a given meeting. Within that time frame, I would like to appeal to speakers to deliver their statements at a normal speed so that interpretation into the six official United Nations languages may be provided properly.

I would also like to draw attention to the decision taken by the General Assembly at previous sessions that the practice of expressing congratulations inside the Assembly Hall after a speech has been delivered is strongly discouraged. In that connection, after delivering their statements, speakers are invited to exit

the Hall through Room GA-200, located behind the podium, before returning to their seats.

May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to proceed in the same manner during the general debate of the sixty-eighth session?

It was so decided.

The President: Finally, I would like to draw the attention of members to the fact that during the general debate, official photos of all speakers are taken by the Department of Public Information. Members interested in obtaining those photos are requested to contact the Photo Library of the United Nations.

Address by Ms. Dilma Rousseff, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil.

Ms. Dilma Rousseff, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Ms. Dilma Rousseff, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Rousseff (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): I would first like to briefly express my pleasure at seeing the representative of Antigua and Barbuda, a country that is part of the Caribbean and is very dear to Brazil and our region, at the helm of the proceedings of this session of the General Assembly. You can count on the permanent support of my Government, Sir.

Before I begin my statement, I would also like to voice the Brazilian Government's and people's repudiation of the recent terrorist attack in Nairobi, and to convey our condolences to and express our solidarity with the families of the victims and the people and the Government of Kenya. Wherever terrorism may occur and wherever it originates, we will always condemn it unequivocally and resolve firmly to deal with it. We will never compromise with barbarity.

I would like to draw the Assembly's attention to an exceedingly important and serious matter. Recent revelations concerning the activities of a global network

of electronic espionage have provoked indignation and disgust in public opinion worldwide. For Brazil the situation is particularly serious, since we have been a specific target of that intrusion. Citizens' personal data has been indiscriminately targeted and intercepted. Business information, often of major economic and even strategic value, has been a focus of espionage activity. And communications of Brazilian diplomatic missions, including our Permanent Mission to the United Nations and the Office of the President of the Republic itself, have been subject to interception.

Such meddling in the lives and affairs of other countries is a breach of international law and as such is an affront to the principles that should govern relations between them, and between friendly nations in particular. A nation can never promote its own sovereignty in a way that damages the sovereignty of another. The right of one country's citizens to security can never be ensured by violating the fundamental human and civil rights of those of another. It is even worse when private companies support such espionage activity. The argument that the illegal interception of information and data is allegedly intended to protect against terrorism is untenable.

Brazil knows how to protect itself. We repudiate and fight terrorist groups; we do not give them shelter. We are a democratic country surrounded by democratic, peaceful countries that respect international law. We have lived in peace with our neighbours for more than 140 years. Like many other Latin Americans, I have fought arbitrary behaviour and censorship myself and therefore cannot possibly fail to uncompromisingly defend individuals' right to privacy and the sovereignty of my country.

Without the right to privacy there is no real freedom of speech and opinion and therefore no genuine democracy. Without respect for sovereignty there is no basis for normal relations among nations. What we have before us is a serious violation of human rights and civil liberties through the invasion and capture of confidential secret information pertaining to business activities and, above all, a case of disrespect for the national sovereignty of my country. We have registered our protest with the Government of the United States and we have demanded explanations, apologies and guarantees that such procedures will never be repeated.

Friendly Governments and societies that seek to build a truly strategic partnership, as in our case,

cannot possibly allow recurring illegal actions to take place as if they constituted a normal, ordinary practice. They are unacceptable. Brazil will redouble its efforts to adopt legislation, technologies and mechanisms to protect us adequately from the illegal interception of communications and data. My Administration will do everything within its reach and powers to defend the human rights of all Brazilians and all the world's citizens, as well as to protect the fruits of the ingenuity of Brazilian workers and companies.

The problem, however, goes beyond the bilateral relationship of two countries. It affects the international community itself and demands a response from it. Information and telecommunication technologies cannot become the new battlefield among States. The time is ripe to create the conditions to prevent cyberspace from being used as a weapon of war through espionage, sabotage and attacks against the systems and infrastructure of other countries. The United Nations must play a leading role in the effort to properly regulate the conduct of States with regard to those technologies. It should also consider the importance of the Internet and social networks as part of our efforts to build democracy worldwide.

For that reason, Brazil will present proposals for the establishment of a multilateral civil framework for the governance and use of the Internet, as well as measures to guarantee the effective protection of the data and information that traverse it. We must establish multilateral mechanisms for the worldwide web that are capable of ensuring key principles. The first is freedom of expression, individual privacy and respect for human rights; secondly, multilateral, open democratic governance, conducted with transparency while stimulating collective creativity and the broad participation of civil society, Governments and the private sector; thirdly, the principle of universality, which ensures social and human development along with the construction of inclusive and non-discriminatory societies; fourthly, cultural diversity, without the imposition of beliefs, customs or values; and fifthly, the neutrality of the web, which must be governed only by technical and ethical criteria, rendering unacceptable any restriction of it for political, commercial, religious or any other purposes. Harnessing the full potential of the Internet therefore requires responsible regulation that will simultaneously guarantee the freedom of expression, security and respect for human rights.

The choice of the post-2015 development agenda as the theme for this session of the General Assembly could not be more appropriate. The fight against poverty, hunger and inequality constitutes the greatest challenge of our time. For that reason, Brazil has adopted a socially inclusive economic model based on generating employment, strengthening small-scale family agriculture, expanding credit, increasing the worth of salaries and developing a vast social protection network, particularly through our family stipend programme. In addition to those achievements, we have lifted 22 million Brazilians out of extreme poverty in only two years through our plan to free Brazil of extreme poverty. We have drastically reduced child mortality. A recent UNICEF report indicates that Brazil has achieved one of the most significant reductions in the child mortality in the world.

Children are a top priority for Brazil. That is reflected in our commitment to education. We are the country that has most increased public investment in education, according to the latest Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development report. We have also just approved legislation that earmarks 75 per cent of all petroleum revenue to education and 25 per cent to health services.

In the debate on the post-2015 development agenda we must focus on the results of the Rio de Janeiro United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development as key drivers. The major step taken in Rio de Janeiro was to place poverty at the very centre of the sustainable development agenda. Poverty is not a problem exclusive to developing countries, and environmental protection is not a goal to achieve only after poverty is overcome. The meaning of the post-2015 agenda is the development of a world in which it is possible to grow, to include, to conserve and to protect. By promoting social mobility and overcoming extreme poverty, as we are doing, we have created an immense contingent of citizens with improved quality of life, increased access to information and greater awareness of their rights — citizens with new hopes, new desires and new demands.

The demonstrations last June in Brazil were an inseparable part of our process of building democracy and of social change. My Administration did not repress them; on the contrary, it listened to and understood the voices from the streets. We listened and understood because we ourselves came from the streets. We ourselves came of age and developed through the great

struggles of Brazil. The street is our ground, our base. The protesters did not ask for a return to the past. Rather, they asked for further progress towards a future of greater rights, more participation and more social gains.

In Brazil, it was during this decade that we experienced the greatest reduction in social inequality in the past 50 years. It was during this decade that we created a system of social protection that has allowed us to nearly eradicate extreme poverty. We know all too well that democracy generates the desire for more democracy, that social inclusion creates demands for further social inclusion, and that quality of life awakens people's yearning for even more quality of life. For us, all the progress achieved thus far is just a beginning. Our development strategy demands more, as desired by all Brazilians.

It is not enough to listen. We must act. We must transform this extraordinary energy into achievements for everyone. I have therefore launched five major pacts: a pact against corruption and for political reform; a pact for urban mobility, geared towards the improvement of public transportation and urban reform; a pact for education, our great passport to the future, which will be supported by royalties from oil revenues and the petroleum social fund; a health pact that provides for doctors to assist Brazilians in the poorest and most remote regions of the country; and a fiscal responsibility pact, to guarantee the economic viability of this new stage in our history.

Although the most acute phase of the crisis is behind us, the situation of the world economy remains fragile, with unacceptable levels of unemployment. According to statistics from the International Labor Organization, there are more than 200 million unemployed people throughout the world. That phenomenon affects populations of both developed and developing countries.

This is the right time for us to strengthen the trends for growth in the world's economy, which is showing signs of recovery. Emerging countries alone cannot ensure the resumption of global growth. More than ever before, it is necessary to engage in concerted action in order to reduce unemployment and re-establish momentum in international trade. We are all in the same boat.

My country is restoring growth despite the impact of the international crisis of the past few years. We have relied on three key elements: first, a commitment

towards sound macroeconomic policies; secondly, continuing and upholding successful social inclusion policies; and thirdly, the adoption of measures aimed at increasing our productivity, and therefore our international competitiveness. We are committed to stability and inflation-control, to improving the quality of public spending and to upholding proper fiscal performance.

We reiterate our support for a reform of the International Monetary Fund. The governance of the Fund should reflect the weight of emerging and developing countries in the world economy. Delaying such adaptive reform will further reduce the Fund's legitimacy and effectiveness.

The year 2015 will mark the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations and the tenth anniversary of the 2005 World Summit. As such, it will be an occasion for us to carry out the urgent reform that we have been calling for since that first summit. We must avoid a collective defeat of coming to 2015 without a Security Council capable of fully exercising its responsibilities in today's world. The limited representation in the Security Council, in view of the new challenges of the twenty-first century, is a source of grave concern. Examples of that concern include the huge difficulty in providing a solution for the ongoing Syrian conflict and the state of paralysis in addressing the Israeli-Palestinian question. The recurrent polarization among permanent members on important issues has led to a dangerous inaction. The Council must be urgently endowed with voices that are both independent and constructive. Only by expanding the number of permanent and non-permanent members of the Security Council and by including developing countries in both categories will it be possible to solve and overcome the current representativeness and legitimacy deficits from which the Council suffers.

The general debate provides us with an opportunity to reiterate the fundamental principles that guide my country's foreign policy and inform our stance on pressing issues on today's international agenda. We guide ourselves and our actions through a defence of a multilateral world governed by international law, where the peaceful solution of conflicts holds sway and where the pursuit of a fair and solidarity-based order prevails both economically and socially.

The crisis in Syria has caused unrest and breeds a sense of anger. Two and a half years of lives lost and destruction have caused the greatest humanitarian disaster of the century.

Brazil's population of Syrian descent is an important component of our nationality identity. Our country is thus deeply involved with the plight of the Syrian people. It is necessary to prevent the killing of innocent people — women, children and the elderly — and to silence weapons, whether they be conventional or chemical or whether they be used by the Government or by the rebels. There is no military way out. The only solution is through negotiation, dialogue and understanding.

Syria's decision to accede to the Chemical Weapons Convention and enforce it immediately was an important development. As such, the measure is decisive for overcoming the conflict and helps build a world free of chemical weapons. I would like to stress that the use of such weapons is heinous and unacceptable under any circumstances. We therefore support the agreement reached between the United States and the Russian Federation to eliminate Syria's chemical weapons. It is incumbent upon the Syrian Government to fulfil the agreement in its entirety and do so in good faith and in a spirit of cooperation. Under all circumstances and in any case, we repudiate unilateral interventions in violation of international law and without authorization by the Security Council. Unilateral intervention would only further worsen the lack of political stability in the region and would increase human suffering.

Likewise, lasting peace between Israel and Palestine has taken on a new and pressing dimension given the sweeping changes that the Middle East is currently undergoing. The time has come to meet the legitimate Palestinian aspiration for an independent and sovereign State. The time has also come for us to bring about a broad international consensus for a two-State solution. The current talks between Israelis and Palestinians should yield practical and significant results in favour of an agreement.

The history of the twentieth century shows that abandoning the multilateral system is a prelude to war, with the ensuing trail of human destitution and devastation. The history of the twentieth century also shows that promoting the multilateral system bears fruit on the ethical, political and institutional fronts. May I therefore renew an appeal for a broad, vigorous convergence of political will that will uphold and reinvigorate the multilateral system, of which the United Nations is the main pillar.

When the United Nations was founded, the peoples of the world rallied around the hope that humankind

would be able to overcome the wounds of the Second World War and the hope that, yes, it would be possible to build, from the rubble of destruction and massacre, a new world of liberty, solidarity and prosperity. We all have the responsibility not to let such a generous and fruitful hope die.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Dilma Rousseff, President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Barack Obama, President of the United States of America

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the United State of America.

Mr. Barack Obama, President of the United States of America, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Barack Obama, President of the United States of America, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Obama: Each year we come together to reaffirm the founding vision of this institution. For most of recorded history, individual aspirations were subject to the whims of tyrants and empires, and divisions of race, religion and tribe were settled through the sword and the clash of armies.

The idea that nations and peoples could come together in peace to solve their disputes and advance a common prosperity seemed unimaginable. It took the awful carnage of two world wars to shift our thinking. The leaders who built the United Nations were not naive. They did not think that this body could eradicate all wars. But in the wake of millions dead and continents in rubble and with the development of nuclear weapons that could annihilate a planet, they understood that humanity could not survive the course it was on. They gave us this institution, believing that it could allow us to resolve conflicts, enforce rules of behaviour and build habits of cooperation that would grow stronger over time.

For decades, the United Nations has in fact made a difference, from helping to eradicate disease to

educating children and brokering peace. But like every generation of leaders, we face new and profound challenges, and this body continues to be tested. The question is whether we possess the wisdom and the courage as nation States and members of an international community to squarely meet those challenges. Can the United Nations meet the test of our time?

And for much of my tenure as President, some of our most urgent challenges have revolved around an increasingly integrated global economy and our efforts to recover from the worst economic crisis of our lifetime. Now, five years after the global economy collapsed and thanks to coordinated efforts by the countries here today, jobs are being created, global financial systems have stabilized and people are once again being lifted out of poverty. But this progress is fragile and unequal, and we still have work to do together to assure that our citizens can access the opportunities that they need in order to thrive in the twenty-first century.

Together, we have also worked to end a decade of war. Five years ago nearly 180,000 Americans were serving in harm's way, and the war in Iraq was the dominant issue in our relationship with the rest of the world. Today, all of our troops have left Iraq. Next year an international coalition will end its war in Afghanistan, having achieved its mission of dismantling the core of Al Qaida that attacked us on 9/11.

For the United States, those new circumstances have also meant shifting away from a perpetual war footing. Beyond bringing our troops home we have limited the use of drones so that they target only those who pose a continuing imminent threat to the United States, when capture is not feasible and when there is a near certainty of no civilian casualties. We are transferring detainees to other countries and trying terrorists in courts of law, while working diligently to close the prison at Guantanamo Bay. Just as we have reviewed how we deploy our extraordinary military capabilities in a way that lives up to our ideals, we have begun to review the way that we gather intelligence, so that we properly balance the legitimate security concerns of our citizens and allies with the privacy concerns that all people share.

As a result of such work and cooperation with allies and partners, the world is more stable than it was five years ago. But even a glance at today's headlines indicates that dangers remain. In Kenya, we have seen terrorists target innocent civilians in a crowded shopping mall. Our hearts go out to the families of

those who have been affected. In Pakistan, nearly 100 people were recently killed by suicide bombers outside a church. In Iraq, killings and car bombs continue to be a terrible part of life.

Meanwhile, Al-Qaida has splintered into regional networks and militias, which does not give them the capacity at this point to carry out attacks like 9/11 but does pose serious threats to Governments and diplomats, businesses and civilians all across the globe. Just as significantly, the convulsions in the Middle East and North Africa have laid bare deep divisions within societies, as an old order is upended and people grapple with what is coming next. Peaceful movements have too often been answered by violence from those resisting change and from extremists trying to hijack change. Sectarian conflict has re-emerged, and the potential spread of weapons of mass destruction continues to cast a shadow over the pursuit of peace.

Nowhere have we seen those trends converge more powerfully than in Syria. There, peaceful protests against an authoritarian regime were met with repression and slaughter. In the face of such carnage, many retreated to their sectarian identities — Alawite and Sunni, Christian and Kurd — and the situation spiralled into civil war.

The international community recognized the stakes early on, but our response has not matched the scale of the challenge. Aid cannot keep pace with the suffering of the wounded and displaced. A peace process is stillborn. America and others have worked to bolster the moderate opposition, but extremist groups have still taken root to exploit the crisis.

Al-Assad's traditional allies have propped him up, citing principles of sovereignty to shield his regime. On 21 August, the regime used chemical weapons in an attack that killed more than 1,000 people, including hundreds of children. Today, the crisis in Syria and the destabilization of the region goes to the heart of broader challenges that the international community must now confront. How should we respond to conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa — conflicts between countries, but also conflicts within them? How do we address the choice between standing callously by while children are subjected to nerve gas and embroiling ourselves in someone else's civil war? What is the role of force in resolving disputes that threaten the stability of a region and undermine all basic standards of civilized conduct? And what is the role of the United Nations and international law in meeting cries for justice?

Today, I want to outline where the United States of America stands on those issues.

With respect to Syria, we believe that, as a starting point, the international community must enforce the ban on chemical weapons. When I stated my willingness to order a limited strike against the Al-Assad regime in response to its brazen use of chemical weapons, I did not do so lightly. I did so because I believe that it is in the national security interests of the United States and in the interest of the world to meaningfully enforce a prohibition whose origins are older than the United Nations itself. The ban against the use of chemical weapons, even in war, has been agreed to by 98 percent of humanity. It is strengthened by the searing memories of soldiers suffocated in the trenches, Jews slaughtered in gas chambers, Iranians poisoned in the many tens of thousands.

The evidence is overwhelming that the Al-Assad regime used such weapons on 21 August. United Nations inspectors gave a clear accounting of their findings that advanced rockets had fired large quantities of sarin gas at civilians. Those rockets were fired from a regime-controlled neighbourhood and landed in opposition neighbourhoods. It is an insult to human reason and to the legitimacy of this institution to suggest that anyone other than the regime carried out this attack.

I know that in the immediate aftermath of the attack there were those who questioned the legitimacy of even a limited strike in the absence of a clear mandate from the Security Council. But without a credible military threat, the Security Council had demonstrated no inclination to act at all. However, as I have discussed with President Putin for over a year, most recently in St. Petersburg, my preference has always been to work for a diplomatic resolution to this issue, and in the past several weeks, the United States, Russia and our allies have reached an agreement to place Syria's chemical weapons under international control and then destroy them.

The Syrian Government took a first step by giving an accounting of its stockpiles. Now, there must be a strong Security Council resolution to verify that the Al-Assad regime is keeping its commitments, and there must be consequences if they fail to do so. If we cannot agree even on that, then that will show that the United Nations is incapable of enforcing the most basic of international laws. On the other hand, if we succeed, it will send a powerful message that the use of chemical

weapons has no place in the twenty-first century and that this Organization means what it says.

Our agreement on chemical weapons should energize a larger diplomatic effort to reach a political settlement within Syria. I do not believe that military action by those within Syria or by external Powers can achieve a lasting peace, nor do I believe that America or any nation should determine who will lead Syria. That is for the Syrian people to decide. Nevertheless, a leader who has slaughtered his own citizens and gassed children to death cannot regain the legitimacy to lead a badly fractured country. The notion that Syria can return to a pre-war status quo is a fantasy.

It is time for Russia and Iran to realize that insisting on Al-Assad's rule will lead directly to the outcome that they fear — an increasingly violent space for extremists to operate in. In turn, those of us who continue to support the moderate opposition must persuade them that the Syrian people cannot afford a collapse of State institutions and that a political settlement cannot be reached without addressing the legitimate fears and concerns of Alawites and other minorities.

We are committed to working this political track, and as we pursue a settlement, let us remember that this is not a zero-sum endeavour. We are no longer in a cold war. There is no great game to be won, nor does America have any interest in Syria beyond the well-being of its people, the stability of its neighbours, the elimination of chemical weapons and ensuring that it does not become a safe haven for terrorists. I welcome the influence of all nations that can help bring about a peaceful resolution of Syria's civil war.

As we move the Geneva process forward, I urge all nations represented here to step up to meet the humanitarian needs in Syria and surrounding countries. America has committed over a billion dollars to that effort, and today I can announce that we will be providing an additional \$340 million. No aid can take the place of a political resolution that gives the Syrian people the chance to begin rebuilding their country, but it can help desperate people survive.

What broader conclusions can be drawn from America's policy towards Syria? I know that there are those who have been frustrated by our unwillingness to use our military might to depose Al-Assad and believe that a failure to do so indicates a weakening of America's resolve in the region. Others have suggested that my willingness to direct even limited military

strikes to deter the further use of chemical weapons shows that we have learned nothing from Iraq, and that America continues to seek control over the Middle East for our own purposes. The situation in Syria mirrors a contradiction that has persisted in the region for decades. The United States is chastised for meddling in the region and accused of having a hand in all manner of conspiracies. At the same time, the United States is blamed for failing to do enough to solve the region's problems and for showing indifference toward suffering Muslim populations.

I realize that some of that is inevitable, given America's role in the world, but such contradictory attitudes have a practical impact on the American people's support for our involvement in the region and allow leaders in the region, and the international community sometimes, to avoid addressing difficult problems themselves. So let me take this opportunity to outline what has been United States policy towards the Middle East and North Africa and what will be my policy during the remainder of my presidency.

The United States of America is prepared to use all elements of our power, including military force, to secure these core interests in the region. We will confront external aggression against our allies and partners, as we did in the Gulf War. We will ensure the free flow of energy from the region to the world. Although America is steadily reducing its own dependence on imported oil, the world still depends upon the region's energy supply, and a severe disruption could destabilize the entire global economy. We will dismantle terrorist networks that threaten our people. Wherever possible, we will build the capacity of our partners, respect the sovereignty of nations and work to address the root causes of terror, but when it is necessary to defend the United States against terrorist attack, we will take direct action. Finally, we will not tolerate the development or use of weapons of mass destruction. Just as we consider the use of chemical weapons in Syria to be a threat to our own national security, we reject the development of nuclear weapons that could trigger a nuclear arms race in the region and undermine the global non-proliferation regime.

Now, to say that those are America's core interests is not to say that they are our only interests. We deeply believe that it is in our interest to see a Middle East and North Africa that are peaceful and prosperous, and we will continue to promote democracy, human rights and open markets, because we believe that those practices

help achieve peace and prosperity. But I also believe that we can rarely achieve those objectives through unilateral American action, particularly military action. Iraq has shown us that democracy cannot simply be imposed by force. Rather, such objectives are best achieved when we partner with the international community and with the countries and peoples of the region.

So what does that mean going forward? In the near term, America's diplomatic efforts will focus on two particular issues: Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons and the Arab-Israeli conflict. While those issues are not the cause of all of the region's problems, they have been a major source of instability for far too long, and resolving them can help serve as a foundation for a broader peace.

The United States and Iran have been isolated from one another since the Islamic revolution of 1979. That mistrust has deep roots. Iranians have long complained of a history of United States interference in their affairs and of America's role in overthrowing an Iranian Government during the cold war. On the other hand, Americans see an Iranian Government that has declared the United States an enemy and directly or through proxies has taken Americans hostage, killed United States troops and civilians and threatened our ally Israel with destruction.

I do not believe such a difficult history can be overcome overnight. The suspicion runs too deep. But I do believe that, if we can resolve the issue of Iran's nuclear programme, that can serve as a major step down a long road towards a different relationship, one based on mutual interests and mutual respect.

Since I took office, I have made it clear, in letters to the Supreme Leader in Iran and, more recently, to President Rouhani, that America prefers to resolve its concerns over Iran's nuclear programme peacefully, although we are determined to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon. We are not seeking regime change, and we respect the right of the Iranian people to access peaceful nuclear energy. Instead, we insist that the Iranian Government meet its responsibilities under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and Security Council resolutions. Meanwhile, the Supreme Leader has issued a fatwa against the development of nuclear weapons, and President Rouhani has just recently reiterated that the Islamic Republic will never develop a nuclear weapon.

Those statements made by our respective Governments should offer the basis for a meaningful agreement. We should be able to achieve a resolution that respects the rights of the Iranian people while giving the world confidence that the Iranian programme is peaceful. But to succeed, conciliatory words will have to be matched by actions that are transparent and verifiable. After all, it is the Iranian Government's choices that have led to the comprehensive sanctions that are currently in place. That is not simply an issue between the United States and Iran. The world has seen Iran evade its responsibilities in the past and has an abiding interest in making sure that Iran meets its obligations in future.

But I want to be clear. We are encouraged by the fact that President Rouhani received from the Iranian people a mandate to pursue a more moderate course. Given President Rouhani's stated commitment to reach an agreement, I am directing John Kerry to pursue this effort with the Iranian Government, in close cooperation with the European Union, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia and China.

The roadblocks may prove to be too great, but I firmly believe that the diplomatic path must be tested. For while the status quo will only deepen Iran's isolation, Iran's genuine commitment to go down a different path will be good for the region and the world, and will help the Iranian people meet their extraordinary potential in commerce and culture, in science and education.

We are also determined to resolve a conflict that goes back even further than our differences with Iran: the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis. I have made it clear that the United States will never compromise our commitment to Israel's security, nor our support for its existence as a Jewish State. Earlier this year, in Jerusalem, I was inspired by young Israelis who stood up for the belief that peace was necessary, just and possible, and I believe that there is a growing recognition within Israel that the occupation of the West Bank is tearing at the democratic fabric of the Jewish State. But the children of Israel have the right to live in a world where the nations assembled in this body fully recognize their country and where we unequivocally reject those who fire rockets at their homes or incite others to hate them.

Likewise, the United States remains committed to the belief that the Palestinian people have a right to live in security and dignity in their own sovereign State. On the same trip, I had the opportunity to meet with young

Palestinians in Ramallah whose ambition and incredible potential are matched only by the pain they feel in having no firm place in the community of nations. They are understandably cynical as to whether real progress will ever be made, and they are frustrated by their families enduring the daily indignity of occupation. But they, too, recognize that two States is the only real path to peace, because, just as the Palestinian people must not be displaced, the State of Israel is here to stay.

The time is now ripe for the entire international community to get behind the pursuit of peace. Already Israeli and Palestinian leaders have demonstrated a willingness to take significant political risks. President Abbas has put aside efforts to short-cut the pursuit of peace and come to the negotiating table. Prime Minister Netanyahu has released Palestinian prisoners and reaffirmed his commitment to a Palestinian State. Current talks are focused on final status issues of borders and security, refugees and Jerusalem.

So now the rest of us must be willing to take risks as well. Friends of Israel, including the United States, must recognize that Israel's security as a Jewish and democratic State depends upon the realization of a Palestinian State, and we should say so clearly. Arab States, and those who have supported the Palestinians, must recognize that stability will be served only through a two-State solution and a secure Israel. All of us must recognize that peace will be a powerful tool to defeat extremists throughout the region and embolden those who are prepared to build a better future. Moreover, ties of trade and commerce between Israelis and Arabs could be an engine of growth and opportunity at a time when too many young people in the region are languishing without work. So let us emerge from the familiar corners of blame and prejudice. Let us support Israeli and Palestinian leaders who are prepared to walk the difficult road to peace.

Real breakthroughs on these two issues — Iran's nuclear programme and Israeli-Palestinian peace — would have a profound and positive impact on the entire Middle East and North Africa. But the current convulsions arising out of the Arab Spring remind us that a just and lasting peace cannot be measured only by agreements between nations. It must also be measured by our ability to resolve conflict and promote justice within nations. And by that measure, it is clear that all of us have a lot more work to do.

When peaceful transitions began in Tunisia and Egypt, the entire world was filled with hope. And

although the United States, like others, was struck by the speed of transition, and although we did not — and in fact could not — dictate events, we chose to support those who called for change. We did so based on the belief that while these transitions will be hard and take time, societies based upon democracy and openness and the dignity of the individual will ultimately be more stable, more prosperous and more peaceful.

Over the last few years, particularly in Egypt, we have seen just how hard this transition will be. Mohammed Morsi was democratically elected, but proved unwilling or unable to govern in a way that was fully inclusive. The interim Government that replaced him responded to the desires of millions of Egyptians who believed the revolution had taken a wrong turn, but it, too, has made decisions inconsistent with inclusive democracy, through an emergency law and restrictions on the press, civil society and opposition parties.

Of course, America has been attacked by all sides of this internal conflict, simultaneously accused of supporting the Muslim Brotherhood and engineering its removal from power. In fact, the United States has purposely avoided choosing sides. Our overriding interest throughout these past few years has been to encourage a Government that legitimately reflects the will of the Egyptian people and recognizes true democracy as requiring a respect for minority rights, the rule of law, freedom of speech and assembly, and a strong civil society.

That remains our interest today. And so, going forward, the United States will maintain a constructive relationship with the interim Government that promotes core interests like the Camp David Accords and counter-terrorism. We will continue support in areas such as education that directly benefit the Egyptian people. But we have not proceeded with the delivery of certain military systems, and our support will depend upon Egypt's progress in pursuing a more democratic path.

Our approach to Egypt reflects a larger point: the United States will at times work with Governments that do not meet — at least in our view — the highest international expectations, but who work with us on our core interests. Nevertheless, we will not stop asserting principles that are consistent with our ideals, whether that means opposing the use of violence as a means of suppressing dissent or supporting the principles embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We will reject the notion that those principles are simply Western exports, incompatible with Islam or

the Arab world. We believe that they are the birthright of every person. And while we recognize that our influence will at times be limited, although we will be wary of efforts to impose democracy through military force, and although we will at times be accused of hypocrisy and inconsistency, we will be engaged in the region for the long haul. For the hard work of forging freedom and democracy is the task of a generation. That includes efforts to resolve sectarian tensions that continue to surface in places like Iraq, Bahrain and Syria.

We understand that such long-standing issues cannot be solved by outsiders; they must be addressed by Muslim communities themselves. But we have seen grinding conflicts come to an end before, most recently in Northern Ireland, where Catholics and Protestants finally recognized that an endless cycle of conflict was causing both communities to fall behind a fast-moving world. And so we believe that those same sectarian conflicts can be overcome in the Middle East and North Africa.

To summarize, the United States has a hard-earned humility when it comes to our ability to determine events inside other countries. The notion of American empire may be useful propaganda, but it is not borne out by America's current policy or public opinion. Indeed, as recent debates within the United States over Syria clearly showed, the danger for the world is not an America that is too eager to immerse itself in the affairs of other countries or to take on every problem in the region as its own. The danger for the world is that the United States, after a decade of war, rightly concerned about issues back home and aware of the hostility that our engagement in the region has engendered throughout the Muslim world, may disengage, creating a vacuum of leadership that no other nation is ready to fill.

I believe that such disengagement would be a mistake. I believe that America must remain engaged for our own security, but I also believe that the world is better for it. Some may disagree, but I believe that America is exceptional, in part because we have shown a willingness, through the sacrifice of blood and treasure, to stand up not only for our own narrow self-interest, but for the interests of all. I must be honest, though; we are far more likely to invest our energy in those countries that want to work with us, that invest in their people instead of in a corrupt few, and that embrace a vision of society where everyone can

contribute — men and women, Shia or Sunni, Muslim, Christian or Jew. Because from Europe to Asia, from Africa to the Americas, nations that have persevered on a democratic path have emerged more prosperous, more peaceful and more invested in upholding our common security and our common humanity. And I believe that the same will hold true for the Arab world.

That leads me to a final point. There will be times when the breakdown of societies is so great and the violence against civilians so substantial, that the international community will be called upon to act. That will require new thinking and some very tough choices. While the United Nations was designed to prevent wars between States, increasingly we face the challenge of preventing slaughter within States. And those challenges will grow more pronounced as we are confronted with States that are fragile or failing — places where horrendous violence can put innocent men, women and children at risk with no hope of protection from their national institutions.

I have made it clear that even when America's core interests are not directly threatened, we stand ready to do our part to prevent mass atrocities and protect basic human rights. But we cannot and should not bear that burden alone. In Mali, we supported both the French intervention that successfully pushed back Al-Qaida and the African forces who are keeping the peace. In East Africa, we are working with partners to bring the Lord's Resistance Army to an end. And in Libya, when the Security Council provided a mandate to protect civilians, America joined a coalition that took action. Because of what we did there, countless lives were saved and a tyrant could not kill his way back to power.

I know that some now criticize the action in Libya as an object lesson. They point to the problems that the country now confronts — a democratically elected Government struggling to provide security; armed groups, in some places extremists, ruling parts of a fractured land — and these critics argue that any intervention to protect civilians is doomed to fail. Look at Libya. No one is more mindful of those problems than I am, for they resulted in the death of four outstanding United States citizens who were committed to the Libyan people, including Ambassador Chris Stevens — a man whose courageous efforts helped save the city of Benghazi. But does anyone truly believe that the situation in Libya would be better if Al-Qadhafi had been allowed to kill, imprison or brutalize his people into submission? It is far more likely that without

international action, Libya would now be engulfed in civil war and bloodshed.

We live in a world of imperfect choices. Different nations will not agree on the need for action in every instance, and the principle of sovereignty is at the centre of our international order. But sovereignty cannot be a shield for tyrants to commit wanton murder or an excuse for the international community to turn a blind eye. While we need to be modest in our belief that we can remedy every evil, and while we need to be mindful that the world is full of unintended consequences, should we really accept the notion that the world is powerless in the face of a Rwanda or a Srebrenica? If that is the world that people want to live in, they should say so and reckon with the cold logic of mass graves.

I believe that we can embrace a different future. If we do not want to choose between inaction and war, we must get better — all of us — at the policies that prevent the breakdown of basic order through respect for the responsibilities of nations and the rights of individuals, through meaningful sanctions for those who break the rules, through dogged diplomacy that resolves the root causes of conflict and not merely its aftermath, and through development assistance that brings hope to the marginalized. And yes sometimes, all this will not be enough and there will be moments when the international community will need to acknowledge that the multilateral use of military force may be required to prevent the very worst from occurring.

Ultimately, that is the international community that America seeks — one where nations do not covet the land or resources of other nations, but one in which we carry out the founding purpose of this institution and where we all take responsibility; a world in which the rules established out of the horrors of war can help us resolve conflicts peacefully and prevent the kind of wars that our forefathers fought; a world where human beings can live with dignity and meet their basic needs, whether they live in New York or Nairobi, in Peshawar or Damascus.

These are extraordinary times with extraordinary opportunities. Thanks to human progress, a child born anywhere on Earth today can do things that 60 years ago would have been out of reach for the mass of humankind. I saw this in Africa, where nations moving beyond conflict are now poised to take off. America is with them; partnering to feed the hungry and to care for the sick and to bring power to places off the grid. I see it across the Pacific region, where

hundreds of millions have been lifted out of poverty in a single generation. I see it in the faces of young people everywhere who can access the entire world with the click of a button and who are eager to join the cause of eradicating extreme poverty, combating climate change, starting businesses, expanding freedom, and leaving behind the old ideological battles of the past. That is what is happening in Asia and Africa, it is happening in Europe and the Americas. That is the future that the people of the Middle East and North Africa deserve as well, one where they can focus on opportunity, instead of on whether they will be killed or repressed because of who they are or what they believe.

Time and again, nations and people have shown a capacity to change, to live up to humanity's highest ideals, to choose a better history. Last month, I stood where 50 years ago Martin Luther King Jr. told America about his dream, at a time when many people of my race could not even vote for President. Earlier this year, I stood in the small cell where Nelson Mandela endured for decades, cut off from his own people and the world. Who are we to believe that today's challenges cannot be overcome, when we have seen what changes the human spirit can bring? Who in this Hall can argue that the future belongs to those who seek to repress that spirit, rather than to those who seek to liberate it?

I know what side of history I want the United States of America to be on. We are ready to meet tomorrow's challenges with you, firm in the belief that all men and women are in fact created equal, each individual possessed with a dignity and inalienable rights that cannot be denied. That is why we look to the future not with fear, but with hope. That is why we remain convinced that this community of nations can deliver a more peaceful, prosperous, and just world to the next generation.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the United States for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Barack Obama, President of the United States of America, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Mr. Guterres (Timor-Leste), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Address by Mr. Abdullah Gül, President of the Republic of Turkey

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Turkey.

Mr. Abdullah Gül, President of the Republic of Turkey, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Abdullah Gül, President of the Republic of Turkey, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Gül: I wish to start by extending our sincere congratulations to Mr. John Ashe on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session.

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, we had every reason to be optimistic about the future. With the end of the Cold War, the moral balance of the world shifted towards the pursuit of peace. A lasting peace is far more than the mere absence of war. We, the international community, understood the imperative of working together for a stable world order. We maintain our strong commitment to the universal principles of the United Nations system and, in a spirit of solidarity and cooperation, we develop effective international responses to the scourge of terrorism.

Yet the most profound crises of our times have been emerging from internal conflicts. Such conflicts have been increasing in both frequency and magnitude. They are largely driven by the problem of political legitimacy, which leads the governed to withhold their consent and limits the prospects for domestic order. Leaders without political legitimacy share a common delusion. Instead of reading the future and leading transformation, they believe that they can buy time with irresponsible actions against their own people. Eventually, those domestic conflicts escalate into civil wars, such as the tragedy we are witnessing in Syria. The actions of those leaders have implications for peace and security beyond their own borders. If some leaders insist on defining their security in a way that inflicts insecurity upon other nations there can be no collective security.

Today regional and international peace and security depend upon the maintenance of domestic order in each

individual nation. True domestic peace is the key to regional and international peace and stability. That is a challenge that we will continue to face in the years ahead.

We all know that no one holds a monopoly on righteousness, yet I would like to touch upon the function of the whole United Nations system. We all need a strong, efficient and credible United Nations. We need a United Nations fit for its purpose in confronting current global realities. The United Nations of which I speak should be a body capable of taking action to maintain international peace and security. It should be able to safeguard security, justice and the people's fundamental rights and freedoms. It should never forfeit its prime responsibility for the sake of power politics.

We must realize that inaction by the Security Council only emboldens aggressive regimes. We need a United Nations capable of forcing the perpetrators of brutal actions to submit to justice and the rule of law. Only through such a United Nations can we achieve the truly peaceful world envisioned by the Organization's founders. Yet as much as that remains a noble goal, it is also an urgent necessity. Decisive action is the only way that the United Nations system will remain relevant and credible. To face that new reality, we need a Security Council that is truly democratic, representative, effective and accountable.

No issue facing us is more pressing than the situation in Syria. Let me be clear. Turkey welcomes and firmly supports the United States-Russian agreement to eliminate Syria's arsenal of chemical weapons. That agreement has to be translated into a tangible Security Council resolution. When Syria comes clean about its arsenal, once and for all, it will be a relief for the Syrian people and the region. As Syria's neighbour, Turkey will appreciate more than most the complete and verifiable destruction of those weapons.

Nevertheless, we cannot forget that chemical weapons were used against Syrian civilians only a month ago. The perpetrators of that crime against humanity must be held accountable and be brought to justice. I also see the agreement on Syrian chemical weapons as an opportunity. I hope it will be a first step in the formation of a security architecture to ensure the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

Yet the recent approach to the situation in Syria also raises difficult questions. Were it not for the use of

chemical weapons, would the international community have continued to turn a blind eye to the deaths of more than 100,000 people? For how long can we afford to evade our moral responsibility to the people being killed even as we speak here? The conflict neither began with the use of chemical weapons nor will it end with an agreement to eliminate them. We therefore bluntly reject any position that is not troubled by the killing of innocent people in itself, but only by the means of such killing. Such an approach is immoral and totally unacceptable. The agreement to destroy Syria's chemical arsenal must not allow the regime to avoid responsibility for its other crimes.

Syria, a great country and a great nation, is consuming itself. It is a disgrace that the Security Council has failed to uphold its primary responsibility in that case. It is deeply regrettable that political differences, balance-of-power politics and geopolitical considerations have prevailed over the imperative to end the tragedy. Staying on this course cannot be an option. When the tragedy began, we spoke of the killing of hundreds of people, then thousands, then tens of thousands, and now we speak of over a hundred thousand deaths. If we cannot stop the conflict now, rest assured that we will be talking about twice that number next year.

I cannot emphasize this enough. Agreement on chemical weapons must not be allowed to substitute for a comprehensive political strategy to address the situation in Syria. The conflict has evolved into a real threat to regional peace and security. Any recurrence of the proxy wars of the Cold War era will plunge Syria into further chaos.

The continuation of the refugee crisis will pose vital social, political and economic risks for the host nations, as we have learned bitterly on many occasions. We know that civil wars are among the most brutal. We also know how they foster radicalism and extremism. Once extremist groups take root in a State, they form autonomous structures and become a real threat to security, not only at home but also abroad. In the end, dissolving such organizations presents the greatest challenge to restoring security in a country.

We must be aware of the threat and realize that with each day we lose in indecision, the more remote the prospects for a peaceful Syria become. After the Syrian people took to the streets against the regime, many international statements were made to support their cause, strong in their wording and promises. Those

apparent commitments raised the hopes of the Syrian people. Yet many nations remained at a comfortable distance, disturbed only by the horrible images from Syria. Meanwhile, the Syrian people's cries for help went unheeded. What could match the Syrian people's disappointment as they suffered the worst massacre of the twenty-first century as the international community simply looked on.

That brings me to the question of what needs to be done. There has to be a sound strategy with well-defined and well-calculated objectives for a peaceful solution. It has to aim to end Syria's civil war, ensuring the immediate safety and security of the Syrian people and the country's stable transition. The enforcement of such a strategy requires a fully determined, committed and robust international engagement — exactly what has been missing since the beginning of the conflict.

In short, we cannot and shall not leave the Syrian people to their fate. The burden of ending Syria's plight now rests on the shoulders of the international community. Strong words of support must now be matched by real deeds. We must be relentless in our search for a new, stable, intact and secure Syria, at peace with its people and its neighbours. To that end, we must devise and enforce a political strategy led by the Permanent Five and the neighbouring countries.

For the last three years, the Middle East has been experiencing a remarkable era of social and political change. The process of transformation begun in 2010 marks the end of the century-old, region-wide status quo. Of course, there have been and will be waves of reaction against the changes. Nevertheless, the advances in the region, including in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt, are irreversible.

Arab peoples are equally capable of building pluralistic societies. Yet we should not expect the newly emerging political systems to transform into mature democracies overnight. It is only through slow but steady democratic processes that societies will come to understand the value of conciliation. The noble cause of the Arab peoples deserves our full and unhesitating support.

The continuation of the Palestinian question for more than half a century has inflicted colossal damage on the very concept of justice. The denial of the right of the Palestinians to have a State of their own has no justification on any moral, political or legal ground. Despite insistent calls of the international community,

the continued expansion of the illegal settlements on Palestinian land undermines the prospects for a two-State solution.

The case for peace is self-evident. We therefore welcome and strongly support the talks initiated between the parties under the auspices of the United States. The success of future efforts mainly depends on the Israeli Government's acceptance of the establishment of a viable, contiguous Palestinian State. There is also a need for the presence of a reconciled and unified Palestinian front.

That brings us to another issue upon which our credibility rests — the question of Cyprus. Repeated attempts towards a peaceful settlement have ended in failure, including the rejection of the Annan plan in 2004. Turkey, as a guarantor, is fully and sincerely committed to finding a just and negotiated settlement. We therefore expect the international community to urge the Greek Cypriots to reciprocate by engaging in result-oriented, time-framed negotiations in good faith. Those who must solve this question are the Turks and Greeks of Cyprus. They must start negotiating as soon as next month, with no ifs or buts. The settlement of the Cyprus question is essential to a stable and peaceful eastern Mediterranean.

Frozen conflicts hinder effective regional cooperation. We strongly urge peaceful resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict and achieving sustainable peace in the Caucasus, based on territorial integrity. We have proposed a comprehensive strategy for regional economic cooperation and development, combined with gradual withdrawal from the occupied territories. We believe that can serve as a solid basis for regional peace.

Another area where regional cooperation is in high demand is the Balkans. In the last few years, Turkey has bolstered its efforts to build strong ties with all Balkan nations. Our objective is to create an atmosphere of dialogue, trust, mutual understanding and conciliation.

We also have a dependable interest in a secure, prosperous and peaceful Afghanistan. Here, too, regional cooperation and ownership is a must. For that reason, I have personally initiated and led the efforts to establish the Trilateral Summit process among Afghanistan, Pakistan and Turkey. Since 2007, it has proven a real success, and I am confident that more success will follow.

Another important issue that affects us all is terrorism. It is real, extremely dangerous, and a crime against humanity, and it must be defeated. We can defeat it only when we get rid of "my terrorist/your terrorist" distinction... Effective international partnership against terrorism remains a key priority for Turkey.

There is yet another issue that needs our attention. Unfortunately, Islamophobia has become a new form of racism. It aims to create an abstract, imaginary enemy from the millions of peace-loving Muslims all over the world. It is essential to strike a balance between protecting freedom of expression and preserving respect for faiths.

The current challenges of development are matters of global concern. Turkey is now running a comprehensive assistance and direct investment package for the world's least developed countries. Humanitarian diplomacy is a key objective of Turkish foreign policy. In fact, Turkey became the fourth-largest donor last year. Including the contributions of Turkish non-governmental organizations in the fields of health, education, and capacity-building, Turkey's humanitarian assistance totals \$2 billion per year. Our engagement in Somalia is an exemplary case. We have allocated \$300 million so far.

Our approach to Africa is one of equal partnership and is best captured in the African proverb which states, "If you want to go fast, go alone. But if you want to go far, go together." For Turkey, relations with Africa remain a key priority.

Turkey is a candidate for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the term 2015-2016. If elected, Turkey will bring an independent voice to the Security Council, one that listens to all and tries to find comprehensive and lasting solutions through dialogue. We expect the support of all Members for our candidacy.

I believe that the new millennium is one in which democracy, rule of law, respect for human rights and global welfare will continue to expand. I believe that an international peace shaped by freedom, justice, dignity, social progress and economic welfare is within our reach. We must join our strength to build an enduring international order that is worthy of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. A stable, secure, and prosperous world is the best way to secure and advance all of our interests. Achieving such a world remains our fundamental responsibility to our nations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Turkey for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Abdullah Gül, President of the Republic of Turkey, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Mr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Jonathan: On behalf of the Government and people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, I salute the President as he presides over the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. I assure him of the full support and cooperation of the Nigerian delegation. I also wish to extend our commendation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and to place on record Nigeria's appreciation of his focused and committed leadership of the United Nations system.

This session comes at a particularly trying period when our world faces a number of critical challenges, which make it imperative for us to work within the Charter of the United Nations to address them meaningfully. It is therefore apt that the theme for this session, "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage", signposts our desire and determination to actively cooperate for the improvement of the overall welfare and well-being of the most vulnerable citizens of the States Members of the Organization.

Nigeria appreciates the consultative nature of designing the post-2015 development agenda. Earlier in the year, we supported this global outreach through inclusive consultations and surveys of a number of Nigerians, who expressed their aspirations with respect to the world they expect beyond 2015. A major highlight of that process, which has increased national ownership of the agenda, is the emphasis on the eradication of

poverty as the overarching principle in the formulation of the successor framework. Tomorrow, Nigeria will host a side event on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in collaboration with the United Nations, a number of African countries and our development partners.

As I had cause to say before the Assembly at its previous session (see A/67/PV.8), the year 2015 is not a destination but only a milestone to a better, safer, healthier and more compassionate world. Let us therefore renew our commitment to the processes that will develop the post-MDG framework.

That objective is of particular resonance to us in Africa, where the challenges of poverty, illiteracy, food insecurity and climate change continue to engage the attention of the political leadership. The good news, however, is that in the past decade, a sustained democratization process across the continent has made significant difference in governance processes, institutions and structures. Today, we have a renaissance Africa, which has moved away from the era of dictatorship to a new dawn, where the ideals of good governance and an emphasis on human rights and justice are beginning to drive State-society relations. This is the present reality of Africa that must replace the old prejudices and assumptions about the continent.

We are firm in our conviction that democracy is fundamental to achieving the requisite stability that will enable the realization of a sustainable post-2015 development agenda in Africa. This emergent Africa will require the continued support and partnership of the international community — an Africa that is no longer merely a destination for aid but one that is involved in constructive, multi-sectoral exchanges on the global stage. Our continent stands ready to continue to engage the rest of the world as a partner in formulating a global development agenda that will guarantee peace, security and stability.

I wish to express my appreciation at Nigeria's selection as co-Chair of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing. The importance of the Committee's assignment cannot be overstated. For the post-2015 development agenda to be realistic, it must be backed by a robust financing framework, which I hope will receive the strong backing of the Organization's better-endowed Members.

Nigeria's commitment to sustainable peace and security propels the country to action along with member States of our subregional and continental organizations whenever stability is threatened in our continent. In recent years, Africa has had its share of conflicts, notably in Mali, Guinea-Bissau, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic and Somalia. It is noteworthy that African leaders, with the support of the international community, have demonstrated the capacity to work in concert and decisively in pursuit of long-term solutions in the affected States. While a lot more still needs to be done, we are convinced that progress is being made.

The recent presidential elections in Mali herald a new beginning that should translate into peace and prosperity for its people and provide a stronger basis for stability within the subregion. I congratulate President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, who is here with us today. Similarly, the political transition process in Guinea-Bissau holds much promise. Among African leaders, there is a greater determination and focus on the transformation of the continent. That is the required impetus for the achievement of development objectives that will benefit the people, and rebrand the continent even more positively.

Although our world has not witnessed a global war since the establishment of the United Nations, there have been several conflicts with devastating consequences and impact in virtually all regions of the world. As global citizens, we have a sacred duty to free our world of wars, rivalries, ethnic conflicts and religious divisions. Our collective effort in our drive for a better world will continue to bind us together.

Nigeria continues to support the efforts of the United Nations in addressing the global initiative to combat the menace of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. We have redoubled efforts to address this onerous challenge within our borders and across the West African subregion. In doing so, we also recognize the need for a broad-based global partnership in the ongoing battle against transborder crimes, including terrorism and acts of piracy. It is regrettable that these scourges are sustained by unfettered access by non-State actors to illicit small arms and light weapons, with which they foster insecurity and instability across our continent. For us in Africa, these are the weapons of mass destruction.

It is therefore in the light of our collective obligation and unceasing struggle to end this nightmare

that I congratulate Member States on the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty in April. Our hope is that, upon its entry into force, the Treaty will herald an era of accountable trade in conventional arms, which is critical to the security of nations. In line with our continued commitment to that project, Nigeria has signed and ratified the Treaty. We will continue to engage other Member States for its successful implementation.

Terrorism constitutes a major threat to global peace and security and undermines the capacity for sustained development. In Nigeria, the threat of terrorism in a few states in the north-eastern part of our country has proven to be a challenge to national stability. We will spare no effort in addressing this menace. We are therefore confronting it with every resource at our disposal, with due regard for fundamental human rights and the rule of law. Nigeria would like to place on record its appreciation to the international community for its support in that regard. The reign of terror anywhere in the world is an assault on our collective humanity. Three days ago, the stark reality of that menace was again brought to the fore by the dastardly terrorist attack in Nairobi. We must stand together to win this war together.

Piracy, like terrorism, is another menace that has attained worrying proportions, especially in Africa's coastal waters. At the bilateral and multilateral levels, Nigeria has promoted cooperation to mitigate piracy's impact on and consequences for the security and economies of affected coastal States. Indeed, in June, the leaders of the Economic Community of West African States, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Gulf of Guinea Commission met in Yaoundé and came up with practical steps to collectively confront the menace of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. That effort will no doubt require reinforcement and wider support and collaborative action on the part of our international partners.

The situation in the Middle East remains volatile. The reported use of chemical weapons in the Syrian crisis is unacceptable. Nigeria condemns, in the strongest possible terms, the use of chemical weapons prohibited by international conventions. We applaud the current diplomatic efforts to avert a further escalation of the crisis. We urge all parties involved to end the violence and seek a negotiated solution, including through the instruments of the United Nations.

The threat that nuclear weapons pose to the survival of the human race is to be understood not just

in the context of States that aspire to such weapons but also of the nations already in possession of them. It is our collective responsibility to urge the international community to respond to the clarion call for a peaceful universe in an age of uncertainty. We can attain that objective if we adopt measures and policies that promote nuclear disarmament, protect and renew our environment and push towards an international system that is based on trust, mutual respect and shared goals.

The President returned to the Chair.

I believe that I express the concern of many when I bring up the slow pace of effort and apparent lack of progress in the reform of the United Nations, especially the Security Council. We believe strongly that the call for democratization worldwide should apply not only to States but also to international organizations such as the United Nations. That is why we call for the Council's democratization. It is desirable in order to enshrine justice, equity and fairness and to promote a sense of inclusiveness and balance in our world.

Our support for the Security Council in its primary responsibility — the maintenance of international peace and security — has been total and unwavering. In our previous membership of the Council we demonstrated both the political will and the capacity to engage in key Council responsibilities. Nigeria has therefore decided to seek election to a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the period 2014 to 2015, for which I am pleased to be able to say we have been endorsed by the Economic Community of West African States and the African Union. We urge the Assembly to endorse our candidature.

Our world continues to be confronted by pressing problems and threats. No statement made during this session can encompass the extent of those problems. The world looks to us, as leaders, to provide hope in the midst of crisis, to offer guidance through difficult sociopolitical divisions and to ensure that we live in a better world. We have obligations to the current generation, but we have a greater obligation to those yet unborn, who should one day be able to inherit a world of sufficiency, irrespective of the circumstances of their birth or where they stand on the globe. We must work to make that world a reality in recognition of our common heritage. We must strive to eradicate poverty, hunger, disease and human misery; we must eliminate the scourge of nuclear, chemical and biological warfare, as well as that of small arms and light weapons. We must dedicate ourselves to working together to address

global, regional and national challenges and to deliver a more peaceful, equitable and prosperous world for all. It is our duty. We must not fail.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Sebastián Piñera Echeñique, President of the Republic of Chile

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Chile.

Mr. Sebastián Piñera Echeñique, President of the Republic of Chile, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Sebastián Piñera Echeñique, President of the Republic of Chile, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Piñera Echeñique (spoke in Spanish): I should first like to congratulate you, Sir, an outstanding public servant from our region, on his recent election to preside over the General Assembly. I would also like to express my heartfelt solidarity with the people and Government of Mexico in the wake of the storms that have seriously affected their country, and with the people and Government of Kenya, after the acts of terrorism that have had such a terrible impact. I would also like to emphasize that during this period of meetings, Heads of State and Government from almost all corners of the planet will have the opportunity to exchange views, share experiences and, most important, generate the momentum essential to building together a future commensurate with the ideals, dreams and hopes of the men and women represented here.

The fundamental inspiration behind the founding of the United Nations, almost seven decades ago, was the desire to be able to depend on a place designed to bring into harmony the actions of every nation aimed at attaining peace and development, a place where all individuals, nations and peoples of the world—whatever flag they pledge to honour, whatever god they worship and whatever ideas they embrace—can feel part of one big family, the human family.

That requires many things of us, but none so important as holding an open, free and respectful dialogue among ourselves, a dialogue that, far from fearing dissent, values it and is nourished by it, because it understands that only when the various nations and cultures join forces will we also see our opportunities expand.

We are living in a world that is very different from the one that witnessed the birth of the Organization and of other agencies such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank after the end of the Second World War. This new world is not the result of war or of the ideological struggles waged during the second half of the twentieth century; rather, it is the child of a revolution in knowledge, science, technology and information that has been taking place for some time and that is now knocking at our doors and creating opportunities for material and spiritual progress for millions of men and women around the world that many of us could not have imagined even a few decades ago. This new world is no longer divided by walls or iron curtains, but is connected and integrated by the bridges of increasing globalization and the massive exchange of goods, services, capital and people.

In this new world we certainly face dangers, challenges and opportunities that are also new, and which in many cases transcend the borders and jurisdictions of individual countries, demanding to be tackled by distinguishing where the responsibility of some people ends and where the responsibility of others begins. Such challenges and problems can be successfully dealt with only by harnessing the force of the unity of all and the responsibility of each. However, although we know we are living in a world that is undergoing enormous transformations, many of our international organizations often seem resistant to the change that such an evolution demands, allowing themselves to fall behind instead of leading the process.

Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations states that the principal purposes of the Organization include to maintain international peace and security, to develop friendly relations among nations and to promote international cooperation in the economic, social, cultural and humanitarian spheres, as well as respect for human rights and the permanent protection of human freedoms without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion. But let us be clear. None of those desires is exclusive to one nation, one era or one specific organization: they all emanate from the depths of our

souls and of each human heart. For that reason, we are not here only to proclaim their value and existence but to ensure their enforcement and application. We therefore appeal not for those values to be changed or, still less, to be forgotten. Quite the contrary: we appeal for the will and the courage to put them into practice. In order to do so, we must perfect our democracies and strengthen grassroots participation, but we must also modernize our regional and global organizations. In that task, as we all know, there is a long road ahead of us.

A good first step in that direction is to move towards real and far-reaching reform of the Security Council, including the enlargement of its permanent and non-permanent membership to ensure proper regional representation, as well as to strengthen its transparency, working methods and decision-making, all aimed at enhancing the effectiveness and legitimacy of its activities.

In that regard, Chile, which was present at the creation of the Organization in 1945, supports the inclusion of Brazil, Germany, Japan and India as permanent members of the Security Council, as well as the African continent's request for fair representation in the Organization. And we join in the appeals to the five countries with the right of veto to refrain from exercising that right in situations of crimes against humanity, war crimes, genocide or ethnic cleansing, since the use of the veto in such cases prevents or undermines the Council's efforts to effectively defend the most fundamental values that enable humankind to advance.

However, Security Council reform is not limited to changes in its membership and organization. It also means abandoning the logic of vetoes and replacing it by a logic of special quorums, so that the most important decisions concerning international security, which inevitably affect all countries sooner or later, can be adopted in a way that is truly representative of the community of nations that make up the United Nations. In the end, if we advocate democracy, dialogue and participation when we govern our own countries, we should advocate for those same principles when we address the form in which the United Nations governs itself.

I should like to take this opportunity also to express my gratitude for the many expressions of support for Chile's candidacy as a non-permanent member of the Security Council in the next two years and to reaffirm

our strongest commitment to the principles and values that have for decades governed and guided our foreign policy. I mention in particular our full, unconditional respect for international law, the inviolability of treaties, legal equality among States, the peaceful settlement of disputes and the self-determination of peoples — all values that provide the essential foundation for international stability and peaceful coexistence among nations. In our opinion, however, those values should be complemented by the principle or notion of the responsibility to protect. That concept holds that it is the primary duty of each State to protect the population within its borders. And if a State cannot or does not want to comply with that primary duty, then the international community can and should intervene on the basis of three universally recognized pillars, namely, prevention, support and the proportional use of force in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, but only as a last resort and when strictly essential to prevent, avoid or deter genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing or crimes against humanity.

In addition, my country once again reaffirms its strongest commitment to democracy and respect for the human rights of all persons, from their conception to their natural death, at all times and in all places and all circumstances, as well as our ongoing endorsement of multilateralism, of a regionalism that is open to the world, and of fair and constructive economic competition among all countries.

In that regard, we reiterate our appeal not only to end the proliferation of nuclear arms and weapons of mass destruction but also to dismantle those that already exist. We strongly condemn the use of the chemical weapons in Syria, as well as the indiscriminate use of force against the civilian population, which has to date produced tens of thousands of innocent victims, including women and children, and has caused a serious humanitarian crisis that represents a wound to our universal conscience and seriously threatens international peace and security.

We therefore welcome and strongly support the framework agreement for the elimination of chemical weapons in Syria, concluded recently by the United States and Russia, as well as the efforts made by the Secretary-General and the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States to reach a peaceful and lasting solution to this prolonged armed conflict as soon as possible.

Similarly, Chile has always defended and will continue to defend the cause and rights of the Palestinian people to have a full, free and democratic State — a State that, like the State of Israel, enjoys agreed, recognized and secure borders with all its neighbours, allowing its inhabitants to live and develop in stable and lasting peace and security. We therefore recognized Palestine as an observer member of the United Nations and hope very soon to welcome it as a full Member of the Organization.

With regard to regional matters, in March 2012, Chile ratified the Protocol on Commitment to Democracy, adopted by the member countries of the Union of South American Nations, and we hope that it will enter into force as soon as possible. In addition, we have reiterated our commitment to the Inter-American Democratic Charter and shall work tirelessly for the cause of democracy, freedom and the full respect for human rights in all the countries on our continent and throughout the entire world.

Chile has also assumed the presidency *pro tempore* of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and hosted the first summit of its 33 members, at which we signed the Santiago Declaration, in which the entire region stated its commitment to democratic values and respect for human rights. In addition, we headed the first joint summit of the Heads of State and Government of Latin America, the Caribbean and Europe, at which nations on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean undertook to promote sustainable development policies in order to encourage high quality investments of both social and environmental value.

In the social sphere, although two years still remain before the deadline set at the Millennium Summit, we can announce with great satisfaction that Chile has attained practically all the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set by the Organization in 2000. We are nevertheless redoubling our efforts to attain the remaining goals by 2015, and working to ensure that the countries that have requested our help can also achieve them. We are also participating actively in the efforts at the United Nations to define a new global sustainable development agenda beyond 2015 that follows on the MDGs and establishes specific, measurable, bold and feasible responsibilities, both for developing and developed nations, with special attention being given to ensuring that economic development is compatible with social development and the protection of the environment.

In addition, Chile, together with Mexico, Colombia and Peru, took part in co-founding the Pacific Alliance, one of the most far-reaching integration initiatives in our region, designed to promote an area for the free flow of not only of goods, services and capital but also of persons, thus allowing higher growth rates and development and greater opportunities for our countries and peoples. We are delighted to see that the Pacific Alliance, which represents a population of over 210 million, one third of Latin America's gross domestic product and more than half of its foreign trade, has, despite its recent emergence, already achieved significant results and is increasingly attracting the interest of the international community, which can be seen in the fact that it has attracted more than 20 observer countries, including Australia, Canada, China, Spain, the United States and Japan.

Lastly, I should like to mention the recent approval by the National Congress of my country of legislation submitted by the Government that abolishes tariffs on imports from the least developed countries, as defined by the United Nations. That is an important demonstration of the Chilean people's solidarity with and commitment to the development of almost 50 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.

A few days ago, Chileans marked the fortieth anniversary of the most far-reaching and lasting upheaval ever to affect our democracy in our two centuries of independent life and which ushered in a period characterized by hatred, division and exclusion not only in Chile but also in a world torn apart by the Cold War. However, in a few days' time, on 5 October, we shall be marking another anniversary in Chile — the twenty-fifth anniversary of the start of the peaceful recovery of our democracy by the free and sovereign will of a vast majority of Chileans, which has allowed us to recover our democracy in a wise and peaceful manner and with the advice and consent of all sectors of our country. From both experiences, Chileans have learned lessons that I should like to share with the Assembly today because I humbly believe that they can shed light on how to resolve conflicts that are negatively affecting other nations of the world today.

The first lesson is that we must acknowledge without reservations of any kind that even in extreme situations, including external or internal warfare, there are moral and legal rules that must be respected by all and that can never be ignored without falling into a serious and unacceptable moral vacuum. Among those

rules, there is the strict respect for the human rights of all, in every time and place, under all circumstances.

The second lesson is that the values of democracy, peace and civil amity are much more fragile than we usually think, so we cannot, and should never, take them for granted. They are somewhat like a tree that needs to be watered every day in order not to wither and dry up. Such care must be provided not only in deeds but also in words, gestures and formal actions, because all of them can and must be placed at the service of truth, justice, reconciliation and peace.

The third lesson is that there is a very close relationship among the quality of democracy, economic progress and social justice, since all of them are mutually reinforcing and since the decline of one of them would sooner or later have an adverse effect weakening the others. Our task, therefore, is not only to strengthen our democratic institutions but also to promote economic and social policies based on freedom, responsibility, justice, equality of opportunity and the fight against poverty, and based on uniting the forces of both private and public initiative and respect for fundamental rights, because such policies are the main engines of development of our nations and peoples.

The fourth lesson that we have learned in our country is that the past is over. We can discuss it, interpret it and, of course, remember it, but we cannot change it, and therefore we have no right to remain prisoner to it, because when the present is anchored in the past, the only thing we lose is the future. For that reason, our generation, which is celebrating the bicentennial of our country, has no right to bequeath to future generations the same hatreds, quarrels and divisions that caused so much harm and suffering 40 years ago. The challenge, then, is not to forget but to overcome the past with a new, positive and hopeful outlook, trying to learn from past experience in order to avoid making the same mistakes and letting it illuminate the way to the future, and to face with greater resolve and efficiency the problems and opportunities of the present and the future.

Those and other lessons painfully learned by Chile enabled us to recover our democracy peacefully and to move forward over the past 25 years on the paths of truth, justice and reconciliation among all Chileans. But that was an old transition, one that, I believe, we accomplished successfully. Today we Chileans are facing another transition. This is a new, young and forward-looking transition that, before the end of this decade, will allow us to turn Chile into a developed

country that overcame poverty and became fully integrated into the community of democratic and developed nations. Those are the commitments that the Government that I have the honour to lead made to all Chileans almost four years ago. We are deeply gratified to observe the solid and sustained progress of Chile towards their fulfilment.

Despite the devastating earthquake and tsunami that struck us in 2010 — at the time, the fifth most serious in the known history of humankind — and the global economic crisis that began in 2008 and is not over, Chile has resumed its leadership, momentum and ability to create jobs and strong growth. For example, our per capita gross domestic product, which four years ago was about \$15,000, now stands at \$20,000. Poverty and inequality are declining and real wages are rising rapidly. All indicators show that in key spheres such as quality education and health, we are making progress in the right direction, further stimulating innovation and entrepreneurship and better protecting our consumers, workers and the environment.

At the same time, we have rebuilt virtually 90 per cent of everything destroyed by the earthquake and tsunami. Obviously, our Government is very proud of the contribution that its policies have made to the attainment of those goals. But we have no doubt that most of the credit goes to all Chileans, men and women, who have made enormous contributions to arrive at this point. If there is something that we in Chile have learned it is that in order to be able to grow and to reduce poverty and excessive inequalities, nothing works better than to rely on the skills of people themselves, expanding their freedoms and unleashing the forces of imagination, creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship that lie within the hearts of each of my compatriots and also — I am sure — the hearts of every man and woman around the world.

Those are some thoughts and lessons that I, both as President of Chile and as a citizen of the world — wanted to share with Heads of State and Government. Those are the lessons and thoughts of a country that may be small on the international stage and remotely located on the world map, but that today enjoys a stable and consolidated democracy, broad and guaranteed public freedoms and an economic system that, after two centuries of republican life, has finally brought us to the threshold of development.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Chile for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Sebastián Piñera Echeñique, President of the Republic of Chile, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Rossen Plevneliev, President of the Republic of Bulgaria

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Rossen Plevneliev, President of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Mr. Rossen Plevneliev, President of the Republic of Bulgaria, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Rossen Plevneliev, President of the Republic of Bulgaria, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Plevneliev: I am truly honoured to address this forum. Let me convey my congratulations to you, Sir, on your election to preside over the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. Bulgaria welcomes the theme you have selected as timely and relevant and wishes you every success.

A 16 year-old Bulgarian boy, writing a school report on the Millennium Development Goals, compared the world's development model to a colourful carpet in which some colours, threads and stitches were missing, making it look unfinished, patchy and ragged. Indeed, the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals resembles an unfinished work. Undoubtedly, a lot has been achieved in the global fight against poverty and underdevelopment, but progress has been unsteady and limited.

Nowadays it is hard to accept that more than 1 billion people still suffer from extreme poverty and malnutrition and that basic health services for many women and babies remain a remote luxury. Disparities in wealth distribution, quality of life and personal opportunities have become more extreme across the globe. Climate change and environmental degradation have reached an alarming level and require our urgent collective response. The well-being of future generations is at risk due to the irrational management of natural resources. Despite our efforts,

wars and armed conflicts continue to rage in different regions and cause thousands of deaths and are leading to humanitarian crises and human suffering. We also continue to witness violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The situation in Syria continues to be a major cause of concern and a risk to regional and global security. Bulgaria strongly condemns the chemical attack on 21 August, which took the lives of thousands of innocent people, including many children. The use of chemical weapons in Syria constitutes a blatant violation of international law, a war crime and a crime against humanity. There is strong evidence to substantiate the assertion that the Syrian regime is responsible for those attacks, as it is the only party that possesses chemical agents, weapons and the means of their delivery for an attack of that scale.

There can be no impunity, and the perpetrators of that heinous attack must be held accountable. Bulgaria, which is one of the signatory countries of a letter urging the Security Council to immediately refer the situation in Syria to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, joins similar calls coming from the Secretary-General and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

My country welcomes the framework agreement between the United States and the Russian Federation to place Syria's chemical weapons arsenal under international control with a view to its swift and secure destruction, and joins them in demanding that the Syrian regime provide the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons with immediate access to inspect any and all sites in Syria. We call on the Security Council to unite and shoulder its relevant responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations, including Chapter VII.

The use of chemical weapons should not divert attention from the persistent gross violations of human rights and continued human suffering. The momentum created should be used to move towards a lasting political solution to the conflict through the resumption of the Geneva process, with the active involvement of the United Nations.

The worsening humanitarian crisis requires joint coordinated action to alleviate the suffering and help those in need. Bulgaria has provided humanitarian assistance to ease the plight of refugees in neighbouring countries. Situated not far from the region, my country

is also affected by the daily influx of refugees from Syria. Despite its financial constraints, the Government has adopted an emergency plan and has provided additional resources in order to guarantee adequate assistance, accommodation and services to Syrian refugees. We count on the assistance and help provided by our partners and the humanitarian bodies of the United Nations system.

We expect that Iran will demonstrate clear political will and address the concerns of the international community by providing credible evidence of the peaceful nature of its nuclear programme. In that respect, Iran's full cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency is of paramount importance. The Government in Tehran must show greater transparency in its nuclear activities and should fully comply with all the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Bulgaria welcomes the successful adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty to regulate the international trade in conventional weapons, and looks forward to its prompt entry into force.

My country is encouraged by the resumption of the direct peace talks between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority at the initiative of Secretary Kerry, the Quartet and the parties concerned. We expect both sides to demonstrate perseverance and commitment to a peaceful solution, to respect each other's legitimate interests and to refrain from unilateral actions that could undermine the process. Negotiations are the best way forward towards the ultimate goal, namely, a just, comprehensive and lasting solution on the basis of the two-State formula.

Bulgaria welcomes the appointment of former Minister for Foreign Affairs Nickolay Mladenov as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq. His mission in Iraq is an important contribution to the peacebuilding and restoration process in that friendly country and to the stability of the region as a whole.

Bulgaria condemns terrorism as one of the most horrific crimes and challenging threats to international peace and security. Terrorism has no face, no name, no colour and no religion. It strikes unexpectedly and scars the lives of everyone it touches. Recently, terrorism struck again in Nairobi. On behalf of Bulgaria, I convey my deepest condolences to the people and the

Government of Kenya, but also Iraq, Pakistan and other countries where deadly terrorist attacks have occurred.

On 18 July 2012, a terrorist attack claimed six innocent lives at a Bulgarian airport. That incident changed Bulgaria forever and is a reminder that the fight against terrorism is a common cause, on which the entire international community must remain united. We believe that the perpetrator of that horrendous terrorist act will be brought to justice soon. Bulgaria is grateful for the moral support, solidarity and practical assistance of other Member States in the investigation of that horrific crime. The critical role of international cooperation in this area once again points to the necessity of a prompt finalization of the negotiations on a draft comprehensive convention to combat terrorism.

Let us take a look at what Europe has achieved in the past century. From a continent in ruins, torn apart by wars, we, Europeans, have created an area of peace, security and prosperity. Enemies have become friends and allies, united for a better future for their children. Today, in the European Union, we have harmonized regulations and share a single market, all underpinned by our common values.

The past 25 years in the history of the Balkans are another great example of what can be achieved when neighbours work together towards a common goal. Building trust, good neighbourly relations, stability and security in South-Eastern Europe and in the Black Sea region is among Bulgaria's priorities. My country remains strongly committed and will continue to support the efforts of our partners from the Western Balkans to meet the European Union membership criteria and take their legitimate place in the united European family.

The European Neighbourhood Policy remains one of the most efficient instruments of the European Union to deepen cooperation and ensure peace and stability in the broader region. Bulgaria attaches particular importance to the Eastern dimension of the Policy to enhance relations with countries of the Black Sea region and members of the Eastern Partnership.

If common borders and geographical proximity make us neighbours, shared cultural heritage is what makes us a family. This year we, the Slavic nations, celebrate together the one thousandth one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the mission of the holy brothers Cyril and Methodius to Great Moravia. Almost 12 centuries ago, they bestowed upon us the invaluable

gift of the first Slavic alphabet. Bulgaria welcomed the disciples Saint Cyril and Methodius and adopted the Cyrillic script, which has helped us to preserve our national identity over the centuries.

This year the international community marks the twentieth anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action on human rights. On this occasion, Bulgaria would like to emphasize its strong conviction that human rights should remain one of the foremost priorities for the United Nations. As a candidate for membership in the Human Rights Council for the period 2019-2021, Bulgaria will intensify its efforts in promoting the highest human rights standards both domestically and internationally.

We welcome the convening of the High-level Meeting on the Realization of the Millennium Development Goals and Other Internationally Agreed Development Goals for Persons with Disabilities. As a party to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and as a member of the bureau of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention in New York, my country is strongly engaged in promoting the comprehensive and consistent implementation of the Convention at all levels, including by engaging disabled people's organizations as an important partner in disability-inclusive development.

My country is convinced that the course of reforms of the United Nations should continue in order to enhance the efficiency, representativeness and transparency of the entire United Nations system. To meet the needs of a changing world, the United Nations should continuously adapt and improve. That includes a revitalized General Assembly, a strengthened Economic and Social Council and a Security Council that reflects contemporary realities. As member of the Eastern European regional group, Bulgaria continues to hold its position as to the need for allotting at least one additional non-permanent seat in an enlarged Security Council to the group, given the fact that, in the past 20 years, its membership has more than doubled.

Based on our long-standing engagement with the principles and values of the United Nations, I pledge that Bulgaria will be a responsible and reliable partner should it be elected as a Security Council non-permanent member for the term 2018-2019. We hope that the Members of the United Nations will entrust Bulgaria with that responsibility, and we stand ready to shoulder it in a spirit of partnership.

We are still a long way from the future we want. The Rio de Janeiro Conference on Sustainable Development outlined a comprehensive agenda for further work to be completed in the three dimensions of sustainable development. The recently published report of the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda presents key proposals for transformative shifts and a global, people-centred and planet-sensitive agenda. Bulgaria is actively engaged in the negotiation process on the new sustainable development goals, with a view to achieving a post-2015 framework that is human rights-driven, builds upon the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals and integrates poverty eradication and sustainable development in a single and coherent process.

The new universal and legally binding climate agreement to be signed in 2015 should reinforce the overarching post-2015 development agenda and speed up the international community's efforts to introduce new sustainable models for growth.

Culture and education should be accorded their rightful place in the post-2015 development agenda. In that regard, UNESCO's role is of pivotal importance. Let me take this opportunity to reiterate Bulgaria's strong support for the re-election of Ms. Irina Bokova to a second term as Director-General.

I would like also to express Bulgaria's admiration for the work done by UNICEF in the service of the children of the world. Bulgaria highly values the partnership and policy advice provided by the UNICEF Office in Sofia and others worldwide in modernizing the national child-protection sector and achieving more equitable and inclusive child care.

Today we are building the world of tomorrow. Young people should be at the heart of those efforts as active participants, not as bystanders. For Bulgaria, young people are key stakeholders in the post-2015 development agenda.

This year Bulgaria commemorates the seventieth anniversary of the rescue of Bulgarian Jews from the death camps during the Second World War, a unique achievement of Bulgarian civil society. Unfortunately, our country was in a situation where it could not do the same for Jews from northern Greece and parts of Yugoslavia. We deeply mourn their loss as well as that of all the victims of the Holocaust.

Recently, citizens from different parts of the world, Bulgaria included, have engaged actively in public

life, demanding greater transparency, accountability, decency and integrity from their politicians. We in my country believe that this renewed energy on the part of civil society deserves to be encouraged and supported. I firmly believe that safeguarding human dignity is the ultimate goal of the United Nations, as, indeed, of any genuine democracy.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Bulgaria for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Rossen Plevneliev, President of the Republic of Bulgaria, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Armando Emilio Guebuza, President of the Republic of Mozambique

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Mozambique.

Mr. Armando Emilio Guebuza, President of the Republic of Mozambique, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Armando Emilio Guebuza, President of the Republic of Mozambique, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Guebuza (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): It is always a great honour for me to address this magnificent House, symbol of equality among States and an irreplaceable forum of multilateralism that seeks sustainable solutions to the growing global challenges.

I join those who spoke before us in congratulating you, Mr. President, on your election to preside over the General Assembly at this session. We believe that your vast experience and knowledge will contribute to the success of our work. We would like to assure you of our support so as to ensure that your mandate is crowned with success.

We also congratulate your predecessor, Mr. Vuk Jeremić, for a job well done during the sixty-seventh session, which resulted in the reaffirmation of the role of the United Nations as an indispensable multilateral forum.

We are shocked by the sad news from Kenya regarding the killing, in an act of terrorism, of innocent

citizens at a shopping mall. We would like to convey our solidarity to the people and the Government of Kenya and to all those who lost their loved ones in the tragedy.

Mr. President, we commend you for your wise and opportune choice of the theme of this session, "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage", based on the goal of creating a better world for us all. That agenda, like the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), should be based on principles such as inclusiveness in its approach; national ownership, within the context of its sustainability; and shared responsibility among development partners for its implementation.

The theme of this session is the logical outcome of the decisions emanating from the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, which galvanized the ongoing preparatory process for the development agenda that will follow the MDGs and is based on a multidimensional approach to development.

In carrying out that agenda, it is important that we eradicate, from both our vocabulary and our attitude, the dichotomy by which an attempt is made to group the members of the United Nations family, which is all of us, into two categories — the generous and the deprived — because in this partnership each complements the other with one's natural and human blessings. Those that do not contribute financially contribute in kind.

In that context, the inability of a State to meet its development targets as conceived and agreed upon in this great House represents a collective failure on the part of the entire international community, because such targets are the shared responsibility of all States. Otherwise, why would we set international targets that are later incorporated into national agendas if they are not to be met?

On that basis, we reiterate our appeal for the commitments made to be honoured within the context of the MDGs, because promises must be kept and we must not fail to meet the expectations that we have created.

We would like in particular to commend the Secretary-General for his initiative in creating the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The valuable conclusions and recommendations contained in the report of the Panel constitute an important reference in the formulation

and negotiation of the development agenda that is to follow the MDGs.

Mozambique had the privilege of being part of the group of countries chosen to carry out a national consultation on the post-2015 development agenda. The trust shown in Mozambican civil society to drive that process must be commended because it strengthened the principle of national ownership of the process. It also created the conditions for Mozambican social actors to demonstrate their growing vitality, which is in itself a true reflection of the consolidation of the processes of democratic and inclusive governance in our country.

Indeed, we have been furthering our democracy, reinforcing our democratic institutions and consolidating our democratic practices. We do so through transparency, dialogue and participation, instilling respect for the Constitution and broadening inclusiveness to encourage more Mozambicans to become involved in the fight against poverty. An open and inclusive presidency and a governance mechanism replicated at other levels lead us, on the one hand, to interact in a direct and comprehensive way with our people in the places where they live and fight against poverty and, on the other hand, places our governing method under the scrutiny of the people.

It is in the context of our commitment to democratic principles and values and to abiding by the legal tenets of our Constitution and laws that, on 20 November, we will hold municipal elections for the fourth time and, in 2014, our fifth general and multiparty elections. The implementation of this electoral cycle is the pinnacle of the exercise of freedom of choice and of citizens' political participation in the democratic process.

In the context of our commitment to the disarmament agenda — an issue of paramount importance in promoting peace and fighting poverty in Mozambique — and as a way for us to associate ourselves with the cause of international peace and security, we will host, from 29 June to 4 July 2014, the Third International Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. We invite all Member States, observers and international and civil society organizations to participate in the Conference.

In August, Mozambique successfully concluded its mandate as Chair of the Southern African Development

Community (SADC). Given its relevance to our theme, we would point out that, over the course of a year and in close collaboration with other member States, the Africa Union, the United Nations and other international partners, we engaged in galvanizing the process of regional integration and in seeking peace and stability for the region.

We reiterate our congratulations to Zimbabwe on holding successful elections, whose results were validated by the country's institutions and endorsed by SADC and the African Union. All the conditions have now been met for the sanctions imposed on that country to be lifted in order to allow for Zimbabwe's development and full participation in the global agenda.

The stability of the Democratic People's Republic of the Congo continues to be a challenge for our region. We would like, once again, to congratulate the Secretary-General for his efforts — in conjunction with SADC, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the African Union — which resulted in the signing of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region and in the appointment of President Mary Robinson as the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, whom we also congratulate. We reiterate our appeal to all signatories to honour the tenets of that agreement. We appeal to the Congolese actors to conclude the Kampala negotiations so as to ensure the return of lasting stability in the Democratic People's Republic of the Congo.

The establishment of dates for the presidential and legislative elections this year in Madagascar creates good prospects for the conclusion of the political transition process in that country. We must therefore continue to provide our support to ensure that this process is successful.

Within the framework of our chairmanship of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, we remain steadfast and committed to the stability of Guinea-Bissau. We welcome the efforts of the Guinea-Bissau political actors to restore stability to their country. We also commend other partners of Guinea-Bissau — including the Economic Community of West African States, the African Union, the European Union and the United Nations — which have contributed to the creation of a new dynamic that seeks to find lasting solutions to the political crisis. We also welcome the appointment of President Ramos Horta as Special

Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of Mission for the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau. We reiterate our appeal to the international community to continue to mobilize the resources needed to fundamental elections and, above all, to strengthen State institutions in Guinea-Bissau.

The agenda of this session focuses on development, the successful implementation of which can occur only in a climate of international of peace and security. In seeking solutions to the conflicts in different parts of the world, the multilateral approach, based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, must prevail. Safeguarding world peace will always be our collective responsibility and never that of one country or of group of States. In that context, the reform of the United Nations, particularly of the Security Council, must continue to receive our special attention so as to ensure that that organ is more representative, democratic and credible and that it can respond more effectively to the various challenges of the contemporary world.

It will always be a paradox that whenever social, environmental and economic issues arise, all countries understand that multilateral cooperation is a mechanism that cannot be avoided, but that decisions involving peace or war tend to be made behind closed doors by a small group of States. At a time in which concepts such as democracy, inclusion, ownership and transparency enjoy renewed prominence, we must all accept that the time has come to balance the imbalances that are contrary to multilateralism.

It is in the context of this overall framework that the Republic of Mozambique maintains its support for the self-determination of the Palestinian people, the existence of a Palestinian State based on the relevant United Nations resolutions and the two-State solution in which Palestine and Israel live side by side and in an environment of peace and security. We further support the self-determination of the Saharawi people. Moreover, the Republic of Mozambique reaffirms the need to end economic trade and financial embargos against Cuba.

Once again, we reiterate our commitment to the noble ideals of the United Nations and reaffirm that we will continue to do our part in building an increasingly better, more stable and prosperous world.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Mozambique for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Armando Emilio Guebuza, President of the Republic of Mozambique, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. François Hollande, President of the French Republic

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the French Republic.

Mr. François Hollande, President of the French Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. François Hollande, President of the French Republic, and invite him to address the Assembly.

President Hollande (spoke in French): It is an honour for the United Nations to act everywhere where the freedom of peoples is denied. It is an honour for the United Nations to act where fundamental rights are compromised. It is an honour for the United Nations to intervene where extremism threatens the security of the world. It is an honour for the United Nations to act on behalf of peace.

In Syria, the situation is becoming urgent because 120,000 people have died over the past two and a half years — 90,000 in the past year alone. One-fourth of the population is displaced. Millions of Syrians have become refugees and the country has been destroyed. The worst happened on 21 August in Damascus, when chemical weapons were used against civilians, including women and children. United Nations inspectors, sent officially on behalf of the Organization have, established unequivocally and with certainty the use of these weapons.

In the face of this horrifying crime, France sought a strong reaction to punish this violation of international law and to dissuade Bashir Al-Assad's regime from committing new massacres. This pressure exerted by my country, along with others, in particular the United States, has seen some initial results. Negotiations are under way as we speak to ensure the verification and destruction of Syria's chemical weapons.

However, if these negotiations are to attain their ultimate end, I have set out three requirements. The first is that any text must clearly make it possible for the Security Council to become seized of this issue of

chemical weapons at any given moment. The second requirement is that the draft resolution we are preparing provides for coercive measures under Chapter VII in the event that the Syrian regime fails to respect its commitments. Since the agreement signed between the United States and Russia has the same provision, that is all the more reason to include it in the draft resolution. The third requirement is that those who have committed these crimes must be held accountable before justice.

But we cannot limit ourselves to this draft resolution, which must be adopted soon. We must end this war, the deadliest since the beginning of the century. The solution is political. Too much time has been squandered, and I will not refer again to the blocking of action in the Security Council. During this period, not only has the regime increased its violence, but terrorist groups have also taken advantage of the international community's inertia, to the detriment of the democratic forces found within the Syrian National Coalition.

This is why the "Geneva II" conference must be held as soon as possible. For France, however, Geneva II is not just a talk shop. It must be a conference to define the objective for putting in place a transitional Government with full executive powers, mandated to re-establish civil peace, to protect all communities and to organize elections in due time. I am sometimes asked about participants in this conference. My response is simple. All countries — and I repeat, all countries — that accept the goal of installing a transitional Government and clearly acknowledge their commitment to a political solution will be welcome at the conference.

Of equal urgency is the humanitarian situation. In Syria, the displaced are in the millions, and there are now more than 1.5 million refugees in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. The prolongation of the crisis poses a direct threat to the unity and security of Lebanon, nearly 20 per cent of whose population is now of Syrian origin.

I would like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for having organized the first meeting of the International Support Group for Lebanon. France is committed to that country because we know how much it has suffered in recent years from disturbances in the Middle East and how much it needs to be supported today in its efforts to host refugees.

There are serious concerns in that part of the Middle East, but there are also glimmers of hope.

The first is the resumption of negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Only that will enable peace to be achieved. It requires the coexistence of two States, both with safe and recognized borders. We must do everything to ensure that the opportunity that now exists for Israelis, Palestinians and the entire region is seized to finally bring an end to a conflict that whose regional and international repercussions are well known to us all. Negotiating peace between Israel and Palestine would be an historic act.

The second glimmer of hope is found in the statements of the new Iranian President, which reflect an evolution. I will not exaggerate them, but the question now is to know whether those words will be translated into actions, in particular concerning the nuclear issue. For the past 10 years, our discussions have not progressed, leading the the international community to adopt increasingly severe sanctions. The situation is dangerous, as we all know. Therefore, France expects from Iran concrete gestures reflecting that country's renunciation its military nuclear programme, although it clearly retains the right to pursue its civilian programme. That is why I have chosen to engage in direct and open dialogue with President Rouhani. I will also say from this rostrum that while I am in favour of dialogue, I remain firm on the serious issue of nuclear proliferation.

The Middle East is not the only region of the world that is of concern to us. Africa has fallen prey to terrorism, and the barbaric attack in Nairobi confirms that to us once again, tragically. Victories are possible against terrorism. In Mali, with the clear mandate of the Security Council, African and French forces, with the support of Europe, intervened in response to the appeal of the authorities in Bamako and brought an end to a broad terrorist offensive. Today we see the results. Mali has regained its territorial integrity. It has ensured the security of its population, and it has even been able to hold, on the scheduled date, a presidential election that has been recognized as incontestable. I welcome the new President of Mali, Mr. Ibrahim Boubacar Keita. His election is evidence of a great victory for West Africa against terrorism.

However, the threat continues to weigh heavily on the Sahel and in Libya, where weapons are ubiquitous and where terrorist groups have found refuge. We must assist the Libyan authorities to ensure the security of their territory and of their population. France is prepared to do so.

I would like to sound an alarm, as I did last year with respect to Mali. The warning here is about the Central African Republic — a small country that has been ravaged by coups and conflicts for years. Today, chaos has taken root and civilians are yet again its victims. We must bring an end to the abuse, which is also sectarian in nature. That is why I would like the Security Council to issue a mandate and provide the logistical and financial means to create an African force, with its first mission to re-establish stability in the Central African Republic.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, women and children are victims of violence every day in the Kivu region. Again, it is essential that we continue to strengthen the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to implement the Addis Ababa agreement, and to reject all external interference.

We must learn from the experience of recent years. Everywhere chaos reigns, terrorism takes root and grows. That is the case in Somalia, and the horrific attack against Kenya reminds us that Al-Shaabab-affiliated groups, while they have been defeated, have not yet been eradicated. That is why the international community must help African States to protect themselves.

France will convene, late this year, a meeting on peace and security in Africa. France has invited all African countries; Europe will be represented, as will the United Nations. The purpose of the meeting is to enable the establishment, training and equipping of African armies to ensure the security of the continent and combat all traffickers, particularly drug traffickers, and piracy. Africans themselves must ensure their security, but we cannot leave them to face the terrorist threat alone.

The best weapons we have are our development policies, because poverty, unemployment and inequality provide fertile soil for violence and insecurity. Again, France calls for the mobilization of the international community through new funds that we must create to finance the necessary infrastructures and to enable access to essential public services.

France is fighting, along with Europe, for the introduction of innovative financing. My country's tax on airline tickets, which helps finance the International Drug Purchase Facility (UNITAID), has brought in more than €1 billion since 2006. My country has decided

to increase that tax by a further 10 per cent to enhance our fight against the great pandemics: HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. With Europe, France has also established a tax on financial transactions. I have decided to allocate 10 per cent of that income towards such development-related actions as access to water and renewable energy, because with development assistance we can help the poorest countries to ensure their future, and thereby their security, and to respond to global warming, which concerns us all.

France is available to host the 2015 climate conference. This matter, too, represents a threat to our own security, because one report after another states that if we do nothing, by the end of this century the temperature of the planet will have increased by three or four degrees Centigrade, with the well-known consequences of flooding in some places, droughts in others. Those direct threats would in turn endanger peace throughout the world. We must therefore seek an agreement at the 2015 climate conference.

The foundations of the commitment are well known. The agreement must be equitable. Each country must do its part. The developed countries obviously must make the greatest effort. Emerging countries must protect their development, but they must also understand that they are directly threatened by global warming. The least developed countries, those that are the most fragile and vulnerable, must be aided in the transition. That is the purpose of the fund that was created in Durbin. The agreement must also be binding: it cannot simply be a reiteration of principles. It cannot simply be wording in resolutions that are not translated into concrete actions. If there is no assessment and there are no sanctions, there will be no progress and global temperature will inexorably rise.

My message is simple. In any domain, whether international security, nuclear proliferation, development or climate change, the worst threat is inaction, the worst decision is to take no decision, and the worst danger is to not see any. And the United Nations bears the responsibility to act. Each time the Organization appears powerless, peace is the first victim. That is why I am proposing that the permanent members of the Security Council define a code of conduct such that in cases of mass crimes, they may collectively decide to renounce the right of veto.

It is also my hope to see the Secretary-General's powers of inquiry strengthened to enable the United Nations to ensure — as it has done in Syria — that

the truth is established in all instances, carry out investigations and act on the results. The Assembly has the sovereign right to take such a decision. Our credibility depends upon our capacity to intervene quickly and effectively in ensuring respect for international law, punishing violations and promoting development to preserve future generations. Our legitimacy flows from the Charter of the United Nations. We must be worthy of it. Within that framework, France will always assume its responsibilities in all domains.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the French Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. François Hollande, President of the French Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Mr. Tommo Monthe (Cameroon), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Address by His Majesty King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein, King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

His Majesty King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein, King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Majesty King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein, King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

King Abdullah: It is an honour to join the Assembly today. I congratulate President Ashe on his election and sincerely thank the Secretary-General for his always invaluable work.

Global security will long be shaped by what is happening right now in the Middle East. Our region can be and must be a house of peace and prosperity, with strong pillars of good governance and wide-open doors to opportunity, especially for our young people. That is Jordan's blueprint, and we are not alone.

But no house can be built when its city is burning. And today, the region's fires cannot be ignored. All the world is in their path. To protect the future, our world

must respond. The Syrian crisis is a global humanitarian and security disaster. Escalating violence threatens to hollow out the rest of that country's economic and political future. Extremists have rushed to promote and exploit ethnic and religious divisions. Such a dynamic could crush regional renaissance and put global security at risk. We have a duty to reject those destructive forces.

Last month, Jordan hosted more than 100 eminent Muslim scholars from around the world. Their work affirms the true teachings of Islam and builds on Jordan's long-standing interfaith and intra-religious initiatives: the Amman Message, A Common Word, and World Interfaith Harmony Week.

The scholars said that there was no single prescribed model for an Islamic State, but they affirmed that the modern Islamic State should be a civic State, founded on institutions and with an inclusive constitution based on the rule of law, justice and freedom of opinion and faith. The modern Islamic State should uphold equality across the ethnic and religious spectrum. The scholars decisively condemned the incitement of ethnic and sectarian conflict, known in Arabic as *fitna*. They recognized that evil for what it is — a threat to the Muslim world, the Ummah, and indeed to all humankind. Jordan has called upon the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to adopt those recommendations, which are critical guiding principles amid the turbulence and transformations across our region.

This month, we in Jordan also convened an international meeting to address challenges to Arab Christian communities. They are an essential part of our region's past, present and future. Jordan has been a historic model of coexistence and fraternity between Muslims and Christians. We will continue to do our utmost to protect our Arab Christian communities and minorities, and we call on all countries to join us in our stand for diversity, tolerance and mutual respect.

The truth is that respect for each other is the way forward for all of us. The historic transformation going on in my region today will not be achieved by formulas; it will come when all of our citizens feel truly represented. Jordan seeks a house of the future that includes all. We are building our future on the solid foundation of majority consensus, minority rights, a democratic culture of active citizenship and peaceful, evolutionary change.

The Syrian people must also have a future. And for that, the international community must act. It is

time to fast-track a political transition in Syria, end the violence and bloodshed, neutralize the threat of chemical weapons, restore security and stability, preserve the unity of Syria and its territorial integrity, and engage all — all — of its people in building their country's future.

Syria's future will depend on the Syrian people, but the world has the duty, the interest and the power to help. And help must come soon. The damage and dangers are mounting. The flow of Syrian refugees into Jordan already equals one-tenth of our own population. It could reach 1 million, some 20 per cent of our population, by next year. These are not just numbers; they are people who need food, water, shelter, sanitation, electricity, health care and more.

Not even the strongest global economies could absorb such demand on infrastructure and resources, let alone a small economy and the fourth water-poorest country in the world. Jordanians have opened their arms to those in need, as we have always done, but I say here and now that my people cannot be asked to shoulder the burden of what is a regional and global challenge.

Let me acknowledge, with gratitude, the generous response to date by the United Nations and regional and international donors. But we can all see the reality on the ground: the need is outracing the response. More support is urgently needed to send a strong signal that the world community stands shoulder to shoulder with those who have borne so much. Those who are suffering in Syria also need the world to be resolute: the Syrian parties must abide by international humanitarian law and principles, and allow humanitarian access, into and within Syria, to reach those in need.

Our international community must also work together for a speedy resolution of the region's core crisis. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict consumes resources that are needed to build a better future and feeds the flames of extremism around the world. It is time to put this fire out.

The talks that began in July show that progress can be made, with willing parties, determined United States leadership and strong regional and international backing. We commend the President of Palestine and the Prime Minister of Israel for the bold decision to resume final status negotiations. We urge them to stay committed to reaching an agreement within the established time frame. Let there be no actions that can derail what is still a fragile process. This means

no continued settlement construction and no unilateral actions that threaten the status quo in East Jerusalem and its Muslim and Christian holy sites. Such threats would be a flashpoint for global concern.

We know the right way forward. And the goal can be reached. It includes a just and final two-State settlement, based on international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative; for Israel, real security and normal relations with 57 Arab and Muslim countries; for the Palestinian people, at long last, the rights they deserve in a viable and independent Palestinian State on Palestinian national soil, based on the 1967 lines and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Let us keep the focus on what we are building — communities safe for families to lead normal lives; a Middle East of many houses, working together in region-wide cooperation; the ultimate security for our future.

The future is ours to build, not in the Middle East alone, but in global partnership. Those who are working to do the right thing need the whole world's support. With every country that is more prosperous and free, with every neighbourhood that is safer, with every person who has more reason to hope, the entire house of humankind grows more secure. Let this be our promise, not only for future generations, but for those we serve today.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for the statement he has just made.

King Abdullah II Bin Al Hussein, King of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ivan Gašparovič, President of the Slovak Republic

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Slovak Republic.

Mr. Ivan Gašparovič, President of the Slovak Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ivan Gašparovič, President of the Slovak Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Gašparovič (*spoke in Slovak; interpretation provided by the delegation*): To address the General Assembly on behalf of Slovak citizens is a great responsibility. It is a great responsibility for all of us who have been entrusted with such a mandate by our citizens. They rightly expect that this unique global Organization will seek and find effective solutions to bring greater peace, stability and prosperity to humankind.

I believe that with President Ashe's experience we will succeed in that task. I wish to thank his predecessor, Mr. Vuk Jeremić, for the vigour with which he presided over the General Assembly at its last session. I convey my deepest respect to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, whose foresight and impartial service epitomize the values of the Organization.

We have been going through a period of controversial changes and unperceived opportunities, as well as unprecedented challenges. The one thing that remains unchanged, however, is the power of our joint efforts and cooperation. Thrown off balance, the world expects that we will assume responsibility for taking resolute action together and on behalf of humanity, not governed solely by our narrow national or corporate interests. The time has come to learn to respect our diversity and become in truth the United Nations. Achieving the two primary goals of this Organization — peace and prosperity for all — remains our greatest challenge and our primary responsibility. Effective multilateralism is therefore in the national interest of us all.

Our resolve and ability to respond effectively are being tested by the current Syrian crisis. The conflict threatens the entire region. It is frightening not only because of the number of casualties and refugees; what is equally alarming is the inability of the Security Council to take any effective action. Thoughtful reflection on all the possible consequences of a military intervention in Syria makes it clear that there is only one good solution to this conflict, the diplomatic one. We must not be afraid to choose compromise solutions that could serve as a basis for positive resolution of the problem in the future.

The United Nations plays a key role in ensuring that civilians have access to humanitarian aid, and that those who commit crimes against humanity are punished and, above all, in enforcing a truce and launching talks on stable post-conflict arrangements under the "Geneva II" initiative. Slovakia condemns the use of chemical

weapons on principle as a crime against humanity and requests urgently that the perpetrators be brought before the International Criminal Court. Continued engagement on the part of the United Nations is essential, since there is no functioning alternative to its role.

Our recent experience in addressing international and national crises and conflicts in various regions of the world, including the so-called Arab spring, encourages us to be extremely cautious when considering action by the international community. The analysis of the consequences of such action must be at least as detailed and elaborate as that of how to conduct a potential intervention.

Slovakia's involvement in international crisis management and in building and maintaining peace, stability and prosperity has long focused on Afghanistan, where the Slovak Republic has provided military as well as civilian and humanitarian aid. We greatly appreciate the work done by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and its challenging role in assisting the Afghan Government with its security, political and economic transition.

Indeed, security, economic development, good governance, the protection of human rights for all and, last but not least, the preparation and organization of free elections, must be the founding pillars in building a new Afghan State. The upcoming presidential election will be a milestone in Afghanistan's history. The key to success of all these processes, even beyond 2014, is national reconciliation, based on the principles of constitutionality and respect for human rights. Afghanistan needs consistent, predictable and targeted support and assistance both from its neighbours and the entire international community. We consider cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations pivotal in that regard.

Africa remains a vulnerable continent with a high concentration of conflicts. We believe that it will be able to make progress towards stability, prosperity and greater cooperation in a sustainable manner, with help from the United Nations and regional organizations such as the African Union. The 50 years of the African Union's existence have contributed to increased cooperation and development throughout the continent, and I believe it will stay on that path. Preventing conflicts and resolving their primary causes are long and complex processes. Africa still needs attention and

assistance from the international community, with a focus on preventive diplomacy and national ownership of all processes. The Slovak Republic supports more intensive cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union, as well as closer relations between the African Union and the European Union.

We continue to pay close attention to the security situation in the Middle East. We are glad to see some positive signals among the worrying news from this part of the world. Slovakia welcomes and supports the renewal of talks between Israel and Palestine. It seems, however, that talks are not enough. A number of binding agreements and resolutions have been agreed on to date in order to resolve numerous issues, but they have not been sufficiently complied with. We therefore expect more in the way of implementation of agreed solutions. That is vital to peace, security, stability and further development in the entire region.

Terrorism remains one of the most serious threats to peace and security. It plays a key role in many conflicts and most of its victims are civilians. We should keep our resolve to do everything to reach an agreement on a comprehensive convention on international terrorism. We will find a solution only through joint efforts under the auspices of the United Nations.

We cannot have a secure, safe and stable environment without effective arms control and disarmament procedures in place as the basic instrument for conflict prevention. The signing of the Arms Trade Treaty has shown that the United Nations has the potential to make history and contribute substantively to greater security in the world through its shared commitment to a responsible approach to arms trading. Slovakia believes that the collective efforts of the international community can ensure that the Treaty will soon enter into force, and we are prepared to do whatever is necessary to promote that. With regard to eliminating nuclear threats and their secondary consequences for health and the environment, Slovakia actively supports the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which we consider to be an important pillar of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

I wish to particularly stress — and I repeat this at every meeting here at the United Nations — that security sector reform is a key component of post-conflict development and effective reinforcement of the rule of law. In the context of the consolidation process, we therefore consider it an inseparable part of

the security/rule of law/development structure. If we cannot give people security, safety, education and jobs, they will be quick to draw guns again in desperation. Unfortunately, experience offers proof of that. Slovakia closely cooperates with the United Nations in building the effective and adequate capacity essential to security sector reform and emphasizing national and local ownership of all processes. The United Nations is a guarantor of an impartial system of support to its members in that area.

Enduring peace requires respect for freedom, democracy, the rule of law and human rights. The culture of impunity has no place in today's world. The role of the International Criminal Court in the multilateral system is irreplaceable in that regard, as it focuses on preventing the perpetrators of the most serious crimes from going unpunished. But its decisions must be unquestionable. The Slovak Republic welcomed the adoption of amendments to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in June 2010. Therefore, we call on all United Nations Members that have not yet done so to ratify the Rome Statute and its amendments.

This year, we celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the World Conference on Human Rights and the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. Those historic documents are still relevant and represent a priority objective that the activities of the international community should pursue. They confirm that the universal nature of all human rights and fundamental freedoms is beyond question. At the same time, they emphasize the interconnection between peace and security, economic and social development, and respect for human rights.

There can be no peace without economic stability and prosperity. Ensuring sustainable development and social stability is beyond doubt the most effective way to prevent conflicts. That is an agenda in which the United Nations has enormous potential; however, it is one of the most fragmented within the United Nations system. We appreciate that this issue is among the key priorities of the current session.

Its relevance is also evident in a series of important side events that focus on meeting the Millennium Development Goals and the development agenda in general. We particularly appreciate the initiative of the General Assembly in organizing the High-level Meeting on Disability and Development with the aim of ensuring the inclusion of people with disabilities

in the development agenda beyond 2015. There are some 1 billion people with disabilities worldwide, many of them living in poverty, who are still excluded from equitable access to education, health care, jobs, and social and legal support systems. This dialogue is another step forward towards the empowerment of people with disabilities. We want to stress the importance of including this issue in the development agenda beyond 2015. We are also paying increased attention to ensuring access to energy supply, water and safe food for all.

Slovakia wants to actively participate in the preparation of the development goals beyond 2015 and is getting ready for a new stage in development cooperation. We have only recently become a member of the Development Assistance Council of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, reflecting our commitment to becoming a full-fledged member of the international community of donor countries. Slovakia has thoroughly studied the report of the High-Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, which sets out a global framework for development cooperation goals. The goals and measures must be coherent with and integrate development, social and environmental aspects in line with the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio.

The new goals must ensure effective and measurable results. The crucial task will be identifying resources to meet the new sustainable development goals. Our efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals have been hindered by the ongoing lack of public funds and resources. The economic and financial crisis has helped to reveal a number of systemic deficiencies in the distribution and control of resources, in particular public ones, as well as the need to draw on innovative resources, including private ones, in the process. Slovakia wants to contribute to the discussion through its work in the Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing.

Until recently, Slovakia was a recipient of development assistance. Naturally, it now wants to give back by supporting countries dependent on assistance from the international community. This year, we celebrate the tenth anniversary of the establishment of a national system for official development assistance. The focus of the development assistance provided by Slovakia reflects the needs of countries that rely on such assistance and responds to the global challenges within

the international community. Slovakia has experience in political and economic transition and integration into European and trans-Atlantic structures. Slovakia now primarily shares the lessons it has learned from building civil society and public governance reforms with the countries of the Eastern Partnership and the Western Balkans, as well as others, including Kenya and Afghanistan. Slovakia concentrates on poverty eradication by facilitating access to health care and education and by enhancing the status of women and young people in those countries.

We are going through turbulent times. The United Nations has the potential to be a global leader in ensuring peace and prosperity for all. But if its effectiveness is not enhanced, the Organization's relevance will be at risk. In order to perform all its tasks, the United Nations must be strong, inclusive and open. Global links require strengthening existing partnerships with regional organizations, partners from the private sector and, last but not least, civil society. We understand that the United Nations needs sufficient financial and human resources to effectively fulfil its mandates, but we call for their more efficient use.

This year, Slovakia celebrates the twentieth anniversary of its sovereign existence. It was only natural that the first steps of Slovakia as a sovereign State led to the United Nations. The principles and objectives of the United Nations represent the firm cornerstone of Slovak foreign policy, based on the values of effective multilateralism. Over these 20 years, Slovakia's cooperation with the United Nations has strengthened and intensified as Slovakia has grown and as its position as a stable democratic country and a reliable, proactive partner at the international level has been strengthened. Thanks to that development, in June I was able to host a summit of 20 Eastern and Central European presidents in Bratislava, where we discussed ways to address the current financial and economic crisis and on good regional cooperation.

Slovakia has been contributing to a wide range of United Nations activities through its work in the Organization's main bodies and its direct involvement in more than 17 peacekeeping operations, as well as by implementing over 400 humanitarian and development projects in more than 20 countries worldwide. Having won the trust of its partners, Slovakia has been elected to all relevant United Nations bodies, enabling it to promote and enforce even more effectively the values of the United Nations in all three main pillars of its

work. I can assure the General Assembly that Slovakia will continue its tireless efforts to serve and assist in meeting the United Nations goals as a reliable partner.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Slovak Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ivan Gašparovič, President of the Slovak Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

**Address by Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón,
President of the Republic of Colombia**

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Colombia.

Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Santos Calderón (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to depart slightly from protocol and start my statement by speaking about a humble woman, a Colombian named María Zabala, who has to bear the burden of immense pain in her heart day in and day out. Two decades ago, armed members of illegal groups arrived outside her house located on the Colombian Caribbean coast, determined to impose their rule of terror. In front of her and her small children, they murdered her husband and two other relatives. They forced her to leave her house and then they burned everything down. She barely managed to remove the corpses from the ashes. She buried them right there and fled from her parcel of land with her children and without any belongings. All she carried was the immense weight of her tragedy.

Today, María Zabala is a courageous and inspiring leader, a leader of victims, who is working for peace in my country. In Colombia, sadly, there are many thousands of cases like María Zabala's. It is estimated that over the past 50 years, over 220,000 people died because of the conflict. That is more than twice the death toll of the Bosnian war in the former Yugoslavia, which was an open and ruthless conflict that moved the

entire world. And to that, we would have to add the injured, the people mutilated by anti-personnel mines, those who have suffered the infamy of kidnapping and those uprooted from their own land, who could amount to almost 5 million people.

That is the harsh and ugly reality of a conflict that unfortunately persists to this day. It is the oldest and the last conflict in the western hemisphere. In spite of the conflict, Colombia has achieved unprecedented progress in recent years on matters of security, in the fight against poverty and inequality, and in its economic performance. We have achieved much — a great deal — in the midst of a confrontation. Imagine how much more we could have done without the confrontation. And I must confess to the Assembly that for me, as the head of the Government, it would have been easy to continue to move forward on the path that we were on and to leave the conflict unresolved, because waging war — and I know how to wage war — is easier than seeking peace.

It would have been easier, but not responsible, because continuing to coexist with the conflict would be like sentencing millions of people to many more years of violence, fear, poverty and victimization. It would not be responsible towards Latin America or towards the world, as they also suffer, in different ways, from the effects of the Colombian conflict. And it would not be responsible towards my own conscience, because we have the best possible opportunity before us today — a real opportunity, and maybe the last — to put an end to the conflict. I could not die in peace if I failed to do everything within my power to seize the opportunity presented.

My generation has not seen a single day of peace, and my dream is for my children and the children of all Colombians to have the opportunity to know peace. I hope that the guerrilla forces understand that the time has come to leave this 50-year confrontation behind; that the time has come to move from bullets to votes, from weapons to discussion; that the time has come for them to continue their struggle, but within democracy.

Today, before the General Assembly, we Colombians want to thank the international community for the support we have received in the endeavour to bring an end to our conflict through dialogue. With the world as our witness, we wish to assert our right to achieve the peace. We are tired of being afraid, we are tired of violence, we are tired of a conflict that pits the children

of the same nation against each other and delays our development. María Zabala is one victim among many, all of whom are entitled to justice, truth and reparations and to not seeing history repeat itself. That is what we are working on in our country.

My Government has promoted our most ambitious bill yet, recognizing and compensating victims in the midst of a conflict. I had the honour of ratifying that bill in the presence of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. But our commitment goes beyond serving the victims of the past; our most urgent obligation today is to eliminate the possibility of new victims being claimed by the conflict. Our obligation is to end the conflict now and to ensure that the spiral of violence and pain will not continue to recur. We are doing that in accordance with our democratic tradition — of course respecting, as we always have, the rule of law — and in compliance with our international obligations. We wish to achieve an end to our conflict without relinquishing justice, much less the truth and due care of the victims.

I take this opportunity to offer my thoughts to the General Assembly on the role of the United Nations and the multilateral organizations in our peace process and its future implementation. The subject is relevant and current, since Colombia is possibly the first country in the world to engage in a process of that nature since the entry into force of the Rome Statute, which will make us a model for other cases where dialogue is given priority over armed solutions, as should be the case.

Former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour of Canada recently stated that international doctrine had not been successful in finding practical answers as to how to resolve the real tension that exists between peace and justice in a negotiation process. Ms. Arbour recalled examples, such as International Criminal Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, which had been given immense resources but had yielded very poor results.

The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, established in 1994, has managed to dispose of only 40 cases out of the nearly 800,000 murders committed in a single year. In 20 years, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia has resolved barely 100 cases.

Therefore, how can we simultaneously achieve the end of armed conflict, fulfil our obligation to investigate and prosecute and realize the rights of victims? That dilemma must be confronted with

honesty and seriousness, and that is what we are doing in Colombia.

We have adopted an integrated strategy for transitional justice that addresses the issues of truth, justice and reparations, which we hope will enable us to make the transition towards peace. We can say that we have been pioneers in the implementation of transitional justice measures in the midst of conflict, giving priority to satisfying the rights of victims. No one in my country wants the perpetuation of violence.

What we are asking from the United Nations and the international community is that both Colombia's and every nation's right to seek peace be respected. We ask for continued support in that effort, along with respect for our decisions and our approach, with confidence in the fact that our actions have never deviated from the values of the international community.

We cannot investigate every action committed over half a century of violence, prosecute each and every one of those responsible and then find ourselves unable to follow through. But what we can do is to build a realistic and transparent strategy that may satisfy the rights of all the victims in the best possible way. If we understand justice and the fight against impunity in a transition as a set of measures aimed at satisfying the victims and not just as the administration of criminal processes, it will be possible to find a comprehensive solution for everyone. I refer to measures such as genuinely establishing the facts of events, the acknowledgment of responsibility, the recovery of trust, access to reparations, and measures aimed at ensuring that there will be no recurrence. In that way justice becomes — as it should be — a support for, rather than an obstacle to, peace.

I want to be clear: there will be no impunity for crimes against humanity or war crimes committed in a systematic fashion. On the contrary, this is the first time that Colombia is seriously assuming the obligation of fighting impunity for crimes committed in our armed conflict. The purpose is not to sacrifice justice to achieve peace, but rather to achieve peace with maximum justice. I am saying that out of deep conviction. There is much at stake, that is, no less than an end to the half-century long conflict, as well as the fate of 47 million Colombians.

We have been involved in talks for one year now, but we have reached agreements on just one of the six items on the agenda. I am still optimistic, but

the patience of the Colombian people is not infinite. The guerrillas will have to decide whether they opt for an honourable and lasting peace, or whether they will continue to wage war. From this rostrum, I call upon them to understand that history has led us to this decisive moment. The time for decisions has come. If we leave empty-handed, we will doom our nation to many more years of bloodshed and pain. We cannot miss this opportunity. Future generations and history will not forgive us.

Moreover, our conflict, with all its violence and cruelty, has been affected by a poisonous scourge that fuels it and is fuelled by it: drug trafficking. That illicit activity has been the main funding source for violence and terrorism in my country — and I would say in the whole world as well in recent times. Without the grim influence of drug trafficking, which fuels the fires of our war, I am certain that the war would already have ended. That is why we have included the topic of illicit drugs as a specific item in the agenda of the discussions with the guerrillas.

If we manage to have the guerrillas change sides, once they have demobilized, and become an ally of the State in order to definitively curb drug trafficking and eliminate illegal crops, just imagine what could be accomplished. A Colombia without coca crops and without a conflict was once a utopia and an impossible dream, but it is one that we can now realize for the benefit not only of Colombians but of the whole world.

Almost a half century ago, in this very place, the Convention that gave birth to the war on drugs was adopted. Today we must recognize that that war has not been won. I say that as the President of the country that has suffered the most deaths, the most bloodshed, the most sacrifices in that war, and also the country that has achieved the most results in the fight against this scourge and the mafias that underpin it.

Last year, when chairing the Summit of the Americas, fully aware of that dilemma, I led a proposal to debate and explore different scenarios in the fight against the global drug problem, aimed at evaluating what we are doing and at seeking ways to be more effective. We commissioned the Organization of American States to conduct studies with experts, academics and people with different approaches on how to face the problem. Those studies were delivered to us in May. Different Governments are evaluating them and they should serve as inputs for discussions at

all universities and think tanks, and in the context of different forums, not just from Latin America but from the whole world, because it is a global problem that requires a global solution. Because of that — because it is a global problem — we expect their conclusions to also be discussed in this body, the United Nations, which has already called for a special session on the drug problem to be convened in 2016.

If we act together on the drug problem and adopt a new, modern and comprehensive vision that is free of ideological or political bias, imagine how much harm and violence we will be able to prevent. I am not just speaking about harm to people, but also harm to nature, because drug trafficking has become a major destroyer of our tropical forests and forests in general, in what can be termed a veritable ecocide.

Colombia is deeply committed to environmental protection. At the Rio de Janeiro Conference on Sustainable Development, we put forward the proposal to establish sustainable development goals as a mandatory benchmark in the development agenda for the coming decades. We are taking an active part in the design of those goals, and they can and should be incorporated into a visionary and ambitious development agenda for all countries as of 2015. In fact, we were a member of the High-level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, convened by the Secretary-General and co-chaired by the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, David Cameron, which has already presented its report.

Colombia, for its part, is continuing to do a great deal. For example, a few weeks ago, we doubled the area of the largest national park in Colombia, the Chiribiquete National Natural Park, located in the very heart of our Amazon region. We designated that area a natural reserve and prohibited mining and deforestation activities in an area roughly the size of Belgium, and not just in any place, but in the area where the Amazon region has the greatest biological and cultural diversity.

This very morning we are launching, with the Prime Minister of Norway and five other countries, a New Climate Economy initiative. With the support of the most respected research institutes, we will seek the best way of making economic efficiencies and the fight against poverty compatible with the preservation of the environment. In that way we are shouldering our responsibilities with respect to climate change, which has already had an impact on Colombians. We will

protect the sources of oxygen and water necessary not just for Colombia's survival but that of the entire planet.

I will conclude by stating that in my country we are working and will continue to work to prevent the plight of María Zabala and millions of other victims from ever recurring. Never again! I hope that the President of Colombia will come to the Assembly next year bearing the good news that the conflict has come to an end.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Colombia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Amir of the State of Qatar.

Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Sheikh Al-Thani (spoke in Arabic): I would like first to congratulate His Excellency Mr. John Ashe on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session, and I wish him every success in his mission. I would like also to express our appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, President of the Assembly at its sixty-seventh session, for his efforts for the success of that session. I would like also to commend the efforts of His Excellency the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, to strengthen the role of the United Nations.

The international community faces many different problems related to peace and security, in addition to challenges facing the efforts made to solve disputes peacefully. This calls for strengthening the United Nations capacity to tackle these challenges and problems.

Peoples from different regions of the world are expecting the institutions of the international community

to dedicate their efforts to finding solutions to the issues of poverty, hunger and sustainable development in a way that goes beyond simply convening conferences and adopting resolutions, and even beyond the necessary collective attention and campaigns that are called for from time to time, important as they might be.

Recently, the Arab region has experienced many historic events and accelerating change. It has witnessed turbulent events arising from popular movements and their forceful entry into the public and political arenas.

Stalemate continues to characterize the Arab-Israeli conflict. That conflict is at the forefront of the issues threatening international peace and security, owing to the continued Israeli occupation and the injustices inflicted upon the Palestinian people, as well as the failure to reach a just and lasting peace in accordance with resolutions of international legality. The continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories cannot be accepted as normal. Its practices include the changing of the demographic conditions in those territories, particularly through the expansion of settlement activity, the Judaization of the city of Jerusalem, the unjust embargo against the Gaza Strip, and intensification of settlement activities in the occupied Syrian Golan and changing its status quo and demographics. This is not simply because such actions represent flagrant violations of international laws and covenants, but also because the Palestinian cause is a just cause and the historical injustice inflicted upon the Palestinian people must end.

The major international bodies were established on the basis of the right to self-determination in the aftermath of two world wars. It is unreasonable that they cannot do anything about the last remaining colonial issue in the world.

Israel should realize that coercion and de facto policies do not bring security. It is wrong for it to establish a State that believes that the prospect for peace lies in subjugating other peoples, denying their rights and making that a priority over peace.

There can be no security without peace. True peace can come about only through coexistence among peoples on the basis of good-neighbourliness, mutual respect and respect for the interests of all. The peace we desire is built upon dignity, justice and the principles of international legality, as well as United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, the principle of a two-State solution and the withdrawal of Israel

from all occupied Arab territories. The experiences of different nations and peoples confirm that unjust settlements do not endure but only lead to new conflicts.

The continued de facto policy in Palestine will not make the issue disappear. It is actually becoming more complicated, because continuing settlement activities are leading to the destruction of the foundation for the establishment of a Palestinian State. The current status quo resembles a situation of apartheid under the domination of one State or even within a single State. That cannot but be grounds for fresh conflict, as no people could accept continued injustice and remain silent.

The inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people to establish their independent State, with Jerusalem as its capital and within the limits of 1967 borders, as well as the right of return for Palestinian refugees, are not only an Arab demand; they also represent an international standard for testing the credibility of international legality, which should not be divisible. Just as the international community has in the past applied the principles of international legality to other crises in the world, we should apply the same legal principles to all issues. We therefore call upon the Security Council to uphold its responsibility to maintain international peace and security and to take the decisions necessary to stop all illegitimate Israeli practices.

Destructive actions and appalling massacres, including the policy of scorched earth and the destruction of cities, continue to be carried out by the Syrian regime against its peoples, crossing all red lines dictated by ethics and mandated by law, particularly in view of the regime's use of chemical weapons against the Syrian people.

It is unfortunate that the perpetrators of those brutal crimes and massacres, which have shocked every human conscience, are, undeterred, enjoying impunity from accountability. That raises questions about the credibility of the human rights and international legality mechanisms of the international community.

The issue is not whether or not Syria possesses chemical weapons, because Syria is a State that is in conflict with another State that possesses chemical, biological and even nuclear weapons. The issue is the use of such weapons by the regime against its own people. The Syrian people did not rise up in order to place Syrian chemical weapons under international

supervision. They did so in order to get rid of despotism and corruption and to put an end to the injustice they have been facing.

We all know that the responsibility for the failure to impose the political settlement we would all prefer for Syria is due basically to the Security Council's inability to take the decisions required to put an end to the bloodshed and to the continued intransigence of the Syrian regime and its rejection of all regional and international initiatives.

From that perspective, the decision-making process in the Security Council must change, since it lacks fairness and objectivity. It has also become a major obstacle to the maintenance of international peace and security and to the punishment of war criminals and perpetrators of crimes against humanity. We therefore reiterate the importance of accelerating comprehensive reform of the Security Council in order to make it more capable of dealing objectively with global challenges and responding to the aspirations of peoples. That can be achieved only through equitable representation of the international community in the Council, so that it can become expressive of democracy in international multilateral efforts.

While it is obviously impossible for any decision to be taken in the Council without the support of the majority of the permanent member States, decision-making should not be monopolized in the long term by one or two States.

I take this opportunity to call upon our Syrian brothers to unify their ranks in order to initiate a transitional period leading to the establishment of a governing system that guarantees freedom and dignity for all Syrians, without discrimination on the grounds of gender, nationality, sect or creed. These large numbers of martyrs have not fallen and all these sacrifices have not been made by this great people so that despotism could be exchanged for chaos or another kind of despotism.

The Arab Spring revolutions, during which the Arab people have risen up, calling for freedom, dignity and social justice, are now facing difficulties that seem to be aimed at reversing the march of time. As such difficulties had been anticipated, it is strange that certain politicians have not been able to avoid even expected problems.

Anyone who knows the reality of the issues in the Arab region and their historical context knows that these

revolutions have taken place in the context of a long-term historical process similar to those experienced previously by various peoples in Europe, America, Asia and Africa. The path to a just rule and to meeting the demands of peoples in all States of the world has never been easy; it has always been replete with sacrifices. It is not easy to follow such a path with patience and determination. Rarely have there been revolutions that have not been followed by desperate attempts by former regimes to abort them. That is why wise people always prefer that regime change should take place through a process of gradual reform.

But we also know very well that in some cases, in our region and in other regions of the world, change could not have taken place through reform. We should not jump to hasty conclusions about the future of the Arab revolutions. This is a historical necessity and a long-term one. It is clear that things in the Arab world will not revert to the way they were and that the Arab peoples have become more aware of their rights and more involved in the public domain.

The State of Qatar has always opted to be an active and effective party playing a constructive role at the international level through its balanced economic and political relations at the bilateral and multilateral levels. We will continue to take that approach, so that the State of Qatar can uphold its responsibilities and commitments at the national, regional and international levels. The State of Qatar aims to be a hub for dialogue and discussion among various parties to conflicts and not to be a party to such conflicts. We aim also to create opportunities for cultural and informational dialogue between peoples.

In that context, the process of reform and modernity initiated by Qatar, which has made it a State of institutions and one that is interacting positively with the international community, was achieved only through a genuine commitment to applying the rule of law and principles of good governance, combating corruption, protecting human rights and basic freedoms, empowering women to participate in public life on an equal footing with men, and creating a healthy environment for children. In addition, our national policies have always focused, as a priority, on the concerns of young people and on creating a suitable educational environment for them aimed at ensuring the maximum use of their capacities.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, in the Middle East is

a very alarming issue. In that context, I affirm the position of the State of Qatar that every State in the region has an absolute right to use nuclear power for peaceful purposes in accordance with the standards and procedures of the International Atomic Energy Agency. We also look forward to convening the Helsinki conference as a step that contributes to the efforts aimed at making the Middle East a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

The issue of climate change remains at the top of our concerns, with all its ramifications for the global system as a whole. In that regard, I would like to confirm and reiterate the commitment of the State of Qatar to continued cooperation with the international community in facing that challenge and implementing the measures agreed upon during the eighteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which was hosted by Qatar at the end of last year, in order to develop a road map for tackling the negative environmental and economic consequences of that dangerous phenomenon.

It is worth mentioning that the State of Qatar has gone a long way towards implementing the initiative of the Global Dry Land Alliance, which it launched in order to establish an international organization that would tackle the implications of that phenomenon. That proposed organization will complement the work of the other relevant international organizations in combatting desertification and drought and preserving the environment without duplicating their work. I call upon all Member States to support that initiative.

The State of Qatar participates as an active and effective partner in efforts to achieve sustainable development at the international level. We have pledged to allocate the required percentage of our gross national product for the least developed countries, in addition to the humanitarian and relief assistance that our State provides in cases of emergency and disaster.

In that context, the State of Qatar has achieved the majority of the Millennium Development Goals and is working towards achieving all the Goals before 2015, as demonstrated by United Nations and regional reports in that field.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Amir of the State of Qatar for the statement he has just made.

His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Serene Highness Prince Albert II of Monaco

The Acting President (spoke in French): The Assembly will now hear an address by His Serene Highness Prince Alberto II of Monaco.

His Serene Highness Prince Albert II of Monaco was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (spoke in French): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Serene Highness Prince Albert II of Monaco and to invite him to address the General Assembly.

Prince Albert (spoke in French): Twenty years ago I took the floor for the first time before the General Assembly. A few months before that, on 28 May 1993, Monaco had become the one hundred and eighty-third State Member of the United Nations, the smallest Member State of the only universal Organization. The decision of Prince Rainier III, my father, reflected the will to fully assume our role as a responsible and committed State within a changing world, where new opportunities and new challenges were becoming interdependent and transcending borders.

That vision remains unchanged over the passage of time. My country continues to shoulder all its responsibilities on the major issues that bring us together here today. Faithful to its principles and to its past, the Principality of Monaco wishes to make its contribution in the most effective way possible to the task of building peace, to which we have been so attached over the centuries.

Therefore, inspired by a conviction that our shared humanity requires that each of us treat our fellow human beings with respect and dignity, tolerance and comprehension, we have endorsed the values and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which we aspire together to defend and to promote. That important decision to fulfil the responsibility that each Member State has is strengthened by the conviction, originating from the holding of the first Earth Summit, in 1992, that sustainable development, without which we cannot aspire to our ideal of peace, must be planned with respect for the environment of our planet.

It is in a sombre international context that we are going to define the post-2015 development agenda, an agenda that will be the cornerstone of the work of the Organization and will be crucial to establishing its political legitimacy for decades to come. The growing insecurity in the world, characterized by the fragmentation of societies, threatens the progress made in many fields and causes multidimensional regional instability that is likely to further deepen existing differences.

The recent attacks perpetrated in Kenya, Pakistan and Iraq are another shocking illustration of that problem. They remind us that many parts of the world are still subject to deadly terrorist attacks. Allow me to extend to the families of the victims and to their Government my deepest condolences.

I must also speak out against persisting conflicts, which hamper development and cause an unacceptable humanitarian situation. With regard to Syria in particular, the number of displaced civilians and refugees in bordering countries is of great concern. A new threshold was crossed with the use of chemical weapons, an extremely serious violation of international law that cannot be tolerated. Monaco associates itself with those who continue to advocate for a political settlement of the conflict, especially in the light of the recent agreement on the control and destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles in Syria. Those responsible for the use of chemical weapons cannot go unpunished.

The International Committee of the Red Cross, which I wish to pay tribute to for its determination to fulfil its mandate in spite of difficult circumstances, must be given access to populations in need and must be assured that it is able to conduct its activities in full security.

The tenth anniversary of the attack on United Nations staff in Baghdad is a sad reminder that we need to relentlessly continue with our efforts on behalf of United Nations staff, who too often have become deliberate targets. That deplorable situation will be given attention in the coming world summit on humanitarian aid to be held on the initiative of the Secretary-General, which we fully support.

The evolution of factors that lead to humanitarian emergencies forces us to examine the ways in which the Organization can act in such circumstances, which include conflicts, natural disasters, climate change and

environmental degradation. We must recognize that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, to which I express my deepest gratitude, needs to be given the means and the resources required for it to carry out the mandate we have given it.

To those who criticize or threaten the progress of the United Nations, the results accomplished show that our courageous political decisions, in the fields of both security and development, are timely and positive.

Together, in the year 2000, we defined the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which today have made it possible for billions of people to live better. Those successes are all the more remarkable given that progress has been achieved in spite of the effects of many crises of a financial, economic, food and energy nature, some of whose consequences linger and are even worsening.

Tomorrow, the special event devoted to the MDGs will be an opportunity to reiterate our priority commitment to eliminating poverty and an opportunity for us to redouble efforts to hasten the achievement of the Goals.

The Millennium Development Goals Report 2013 indicates the areas that require urgent action and the significant gaps that exist, not only among countries but within their borders. We cannot tolerate the fact that there are still people who have been rejected by society, people for whom the hope born of a new millennium remains a broken promise. It is not acceptable that in today's world human beings still live close to complete destitution, where even their basic needs go unmet. That is why we applaud the Secretary-General's efforts on behalf of his mobilization campaigns — Education First, "Every woman, every child" and Scaling Up Nutrition — which push us to shoulder our responsibilities towards the world's most vulnerable.

Education, the promotion of women, the protection of children, public health and the conservation of natural resources are priority elements in the international cooperation policies that I have outlined. They are structured around the eight MDGs, especially maternal and child health, the fight against pandemics and neglected diseases and the promotion of food security, and in particular they are geared towards the least developed countries. It seems to me that a policy of international cooperation should respond as much as possible to their interests, so that a virtuous circle

of development can be launched and help build a more just, stable and less unequal world.

Important advances have often been accompanied or completed by the adoption of measures emerging from the Organization's major conferences and summits. By strengthening the treaty regime on human rights, disarmament and the fight against terrorism, and through the regimes established by the Security Council, Member States have endowed themselves with the means to reaffirm their faith in multilateralism, which is the reason for the Organization's existence, and in the rule of law, which is the foundation of our collective action. It is vital that we speed up the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted in Istanbul in 2011 at the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries.

The work that lies ahead for the President of the General Assembly comes at a turning point in our history. Under his leadership, the General Assembly must not only speed up the implementation of the MDGs but also prepare the post-2015 development agenda and define the sustainable development goals in accordance with this session's theme "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage".

(spoke in English)

His valuable experience and unreserved dedication to the Organization, and to sustainable development in particular, will guide our deliberations. We are grateful to have him, a son of Antigua and Barbuda, a small island developing State, presiding over the upcoming discussions, since we are confident that he is all too familiar with the issues at stake.

(spoke in French)

He should also rest assured that Monaco's representative, in its capacity as Vice-President, is ready to support him in his noble task.

Based on lessons learned from the MDGs, together we will build an ambitious new development programme capable of responding effectively to the demands of our new reality. I have climate change in mind in particular. Greenhouse-gas emissions continue to increase at the global level, despite the fact that we have identified climate change as one of the greatest dangers of our era. The Secretary-General can count on my country's contribution to the upcoming summit on climate change, which he intends to hold next September. His willingness to bring together leaders from every sector

of society — civil society, the private sector, the world of business and finance and, above all, young people, all of them agents of change — is the only path of hope for the radical transformation that is needed. There is no alternative to defining a new programme and a new paradigm.

At the current rate, if we do not change our behaviour, we will need the equivalent of two planet Earths to meet the needs of the world's population, which, as we know, will reach 9 billion in 2050 and has always been concentrated in urban and coastal zones, whose natural resources are particularly vulnerable. That simple fact should prompt us to adopt sustainable modes of production and consumption, in accordance with the decisions taken at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. That essential change of mindset presupposes that we place human beings at the heart of the development issue. It is no longer a question of agreeing on development plans for agricultural, artisanal and industrial capacities. We must consider that it is human societies and individuals who deserve all of our attention. We must study economic and environmental issues in the light of their impact on the lives of people and communities. Taking those needs into account means that we must reflect further on how to ensure responsible development that respects the environment and is truly sustainable.

The Assembly is aware of my personal commitment to issues involving the oceans and seas. In accordance with the Monaco Message on the acknowledged importance of the oceans in "The future we want" (resolution 66/288, annex), which was adopted in November 2011, I am once again committing to promoting the role of the oceans in the definition of the post-2015 agenda and to reiterating my support for a sustainable development goal focusing on the oceans. Climate regulation, food and nutrition security, energy, tourism, transport and international trade — all areas that directly or indirectly affect the oceans — are linked to the three pillars of sustainable development. I think it is also essential to reaffirm how fundamental the oceans are to the world and how serious are the risks presented to them through the excessive human activity that contributes to their acidification and the acceleration of the drop in the resources they contain.

In that context, I would like to say how crucial I believe it is that the international community address the status of the high seas without delay, and how urgent it is that protected marine areas be established, especially

in the polar regions. If the viability and sustainable management of the oceans are to be achieved, only an unswerving political willingness to form strong partnerships that unite all the parties concerned will be able to combat the effects of the overfishing, pollution and acidification of the oceans and restore them to health and productivity.

Strengthening cooperation and partnerships, as well as deciding on concrete action, are also at the heart of the preparations for the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, to which I want to give my full support, along with a needed boost in the solidarity that is essential to promoting sustainable development.

The stakes are clear. Let us, who wish to reaffirm the central place that the Organization occupies in international governance, give it the means to assure that leadership role by being ambitious and resolute in our task. Let us remember the words of the novelist Antoine de Saint-Exupéry: "Being a human being means being responsible".

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank His Serene Highness Prince Albert II of Monaco for the statement he has just made.

Prince Albert II of Monaco was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of South Africa.

Mr. Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Zuma: It is an honour and a privilege for me to once again address this body. South Africa attaches the utmost importance to the General Assembly as the most representative and democratic organ of the United Nations serving the international community.

We congratulate President Ashe and the Republic of Antigua and Barbuda on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. We also thank Mr. Vuk Jeremić for the splendid way in which he presided over the Assembly at its sixty-seventh session.

Let me begin by reiterating our condemnation of the horrific terrorist attack over the weekend in Kenya, in which a number of civilians, including a South African national, were killed. We express our deepest condolences to the Government and people of Kenya and to all those families who lost loved ones, and wish the wounded survivors a speedy recovery. We continue to support the efforts of Kenya and the international community aimed at peacekeeping, stability, democracy and nation-building in Somalia.

The theme for our debate this year, "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage", is most appropriate. In the year 2000, the commitment was made by world leaders in the Millennium Declaration to eradicate extreme poverty and adopt the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs are measurable and achievable targets that were specifically crafted to address the most pressing development needs of the most vulnerable countries. The full implementation of the MDGs remains the key priority on the development agenda for the next two years.

A development agenda for beyond 2015 should allow individual regions and States the space to address the development needs peculiar to their circumstances and priorities. For Africa in particular, the future development agenda should address poverty eradication, income inequality and job creation. We furthermore believe that the new development agenda can be effective only if it is focused on all three dimensions of sustainable development, namely, the eradication of poverty through economic development, social development and environmental sustainability.

We also wish to emphasize that any development agenda beyond 2015 must be based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities in order to equalize the international playing field. We raise this point out of our concern that the global economic meltdown seems to have brought about new developments that are detrimental to the developing world, especially Africa. Some of the new developments include the tendency to renegotiate the rules of the game. New issues are being introduced as prerequisites for development and partnerships and have, in fact,

become huge non-tariff barriers. They include the green economy and clean technology. While those issues are important for Africa and developing countries and need to be attended to, the manner in which they have been crafted restrains economic development, as they are used as obstacles.

We also wish to emphasize our expectations that the developed North and developing South will continue to engage in a genuine partnership. In that regard, the developed North countries should stand ready to meet their commitment to contribute 0.7 per cent of their gross national income to official development assistance.

We are aware of the challenges in the North caused by the economic meltdown, but we are of the view that investing in development in the South, especially in Africa, is of primary importance as a source of much-needed sustainable development and stability in the world. Attempts to delegate some of those historical responsibilities to new emerging economies in the South are unacceptable and unworkable, as such emerging nations have their own historical challenges and backlogs to deal with. Furthermore, any commitment we make to the future beyond 2015 must build on existing agreements, which include Agenda 21, the MDGs, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the outcome document of the Rio de Janeiro Conference on Sustainable Development. In the case of Africa, they must build on the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

Development and security are two sides of the same coin. The best way to ensure both is through good governance and the promotion of democratic values in all societies. Allow me, therefore, to register once again our serious concern that the Security Council, almost 70 years since its establishment, remains undemocratic, unrepresentative and unfair to developing nations and small States, and disenfranchises the majority of the States Members of the United Nations, which form the majority in the General Assembly. We cannot remain beholden indefinitely to the will of an unrepresentative minority on the most important issues of international peace and security.

There has been too much talk about the need for reform, with too little action. We would like to challenge the Assembly today by saying "Let us set ourselves the target to celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations in 2015 with a reformed, more inclusive, democratic and representative Security Council!".

When discussing the Security Council, the matter of the Syrian Arab Republic comes into focus. We have expressed our dismay at the use of chemical weapons in Syria. There is no cause that could justify the use of weapons of mass destruction by anyone under any circumstances. It is, however, our strongly held view that any political transition in Syria must come about as a result of the will of the Syrian people and not through the force of arms.

We welcome the recent positive developments, such as the decision by Syria to accede to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the ongoing bilateral consultations between the Russian Federation and the United States. We support all of the diplomatic efforts aimed at finding a solution to this matter. The international community has an opportunity to use the Syrian experience to ensure that matters of this nature are handled correctly going forward, using existing instruments within the multilateral system of global governance.

Next year South Africa will celebrate its twentieth anniversary of freedom and democracy. We will forever be grateful to those in the international community, including the United Nations, who stood beside us in our long struggle for liberation. We look forward to celebrating our anniversary of freedom with the United Nations and to strengthening our partnership. A strong partnership with the United Nations is critical for the future we want for the people of South Africa.

We also take this opportunity to thank the United Nations and the international community for their support during the recent hospitalization of our beloved founding President of the free and democratic South Africa, His Excellency Mr. Nelson Mandela. We thank them for all for their support and good wishes. The United Nations declared 18 July, his birthday, as Nelson Mandela International Day. That has become a catalyst promoting service to humankind worldwide. We thank the United Nations for that gesture. Our revered former President continues to respond to treatment at his home. His family and our people have warmly welcomed the support he continues to receive from the global community. We are humbled and very grateful for that support.

As we celebrate our freedom and democracy, we remain mindful that our struggle is not complete until the people of Palestine and Western Sahara enjoy their rights to self-determination. Just as the United

Nations stood by South Africa, we would like to see the Organization be at the forefront of efforts towards self-determination for the peoples of Palestine and Western Sahara.

We are deeply concerned about continued illegal settlement activities in the West Bank in violation of international law. Such illegal settlement activities jeopardize the realization of the two-State solution.

The Cuban people also hold a special place in our hearts because of that country's sacrifice for African peoples in their quest for freedom. We will therefore continue to struggle with them for their economic liberation.

At its sixty-eighth session the General Assembly will undertake critical work for the future of our people. Let us tackle the work ahead in such a manner that when future generations look back on this moment, they will be able to say that the leaders of this generation laid the foundation for the eradication of poverty, for building a global society of equality, and for world peace.

Let me borrow from the words of our former President Nelson Mandela on his inauguration day in 1994 when he said:

"We understand it still that there is no easy road to freedom. We know it well that none of us acting alone can achieve success. We must therefore act together as a united people, for national reconciliation, for nation-building, for the birth of a new world. Let there be justice for all. Let there be peace for all. Let there be work, bread, water and salt for all. Let each know that for each the body, the mind and the soul have been freed to fulfil themselves."

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of South Africa for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Viktor Yanukovich, President of Ukraine

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Ukraine.

Mr. Viktor Yanukovich, President of Ukraine, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Viktor Yanukovich, President of Ukraine, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Yanukovich (*spoke in Ukrainian; interpretation provided by the delegation*): First of all, on behalf of Ukraine, I sincerely congratulate Mr. John William Ashe on his election to serve as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. I wish him success and fruitful work as he discharges this important role.

The theme of the present session, "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage", is undoubtedly important for every Member State. The deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals is fast approaching, and the task of producing the ambitious post-2015 action plan is becoming ever more urgent for the international community. I am glad that practical work on implementing that task has already been launched. Its current intensity is confirmed by two important events: the General Assembly special event to follow up efforts made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the inaugural meeting of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

I am convinced that the actions planned by the President of the General Assembly will allow for substantial acceleration during the sixty-eighth session of the work on elaboration of development goals for the upcoming period. We consider the innovative national consultations mechanisms, which are being successfully applied in the case of Ukraine, an important element of this work. Ukraine stands ready to be engaged fully and with maximum efficiency in these developments, which are extremely important for the international community.

The topic of sustainable energy as an item of the post-2015 agenda is of particular significance to us. A new, inclusive approach to that issue must ensure the comprehensive consideration of security, social and environmental aspects. Only such an approach will facilitate sustainable development of energy, especially as regards the efficiency and safety of the nuclear sector. That objective would be favoured by the further development of and joint action on the implementation of the outcomes of Kyiv Summit on the Safe and Innovative Use of Nuclear Energy, which was held in April 2011.

Ukraine, which experienced the worst nuclear accident in the history of humankind, is well aware of the priority importance of issues of ecological safety, the comprehensive conservation of the environment and prudent management of water resources. We encourage Member States to intensify international interaction in this field as part of their observation of the International Year of Water Cooperation and the twentieth anniversary of World Water Day.

Ukraine will continue to diligently do its part to achieve the Millennium Development Goals at the national level. We are eager to establish positive momentum on many key national development indicators. These indicators include poverty alleviation, quality education, environmental conservation, maternal health improvement and child mortality reduction, among others. The leading catalyst for Ukraine's progress towards the Goals is the reform programme, which is the largest such programme in the recent history of our country, aimed at both social and economic transformations as well as the further strengthening of the democratic system and the rule of law. The fundamental basis for internal transformation in Ukraine will continue to be supremacy of the principle of social justice.

We also view Ukraine's European integration aspirations in the light of sustainable development. These aspirations are a determining vector for the country's development. Ukraine makes its contribution to the greater European project, which unites the interests and development goals of the countries of the West to those of the East of our continent. I strongly believe that the signing in November of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union, including the creation of a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, will be an important tool in raising the welfare of Ukrainian citizens and will duly assist our country in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

It has long been broadly agreed that sustainable development is impossible without efficient international security. Conversely, lasting peace is impossible without sustainable development. Events since last year's debate have clearly shown the inconsistency and instability of the world today. It is a world that, despite our common efforts, has not embarked on a more even and reliable trajectory of universal peace. On the contrary, according to the Global Peace Index,

our world has become less safe than it was five years ago.

One of the most painful security problems of today is the civil conflict in Syria, which, unfortunately, is increasingly crossing borders and becoming the source of threats on a regional scale. There is no justification for bloodshed and suffering of the civilian population, including women and children, more than 1.5 million refugees and internally displaced persons, and tens of thousands of foreign citizens who have found themselves in danger. We must do everything in our power to allay the pain and to contain and heal the open wound of his conflict as soon as possible.

In our joint actions to settle the conflict, we have to rely on humanistic values, sobriety, competence and mutual responsibility. Ukraine has extended its helping hand to the Syrian population by rendering assistance through United Nations mechanisms. Today, we urge the entire international community to take part in that humanitarian mission.

We welcome the plan produced by Russia and the United States to place the Syrian stockpiles of chemical weapons under the control of the international community for their subsequent destruction. At the same time, Ukraine is convinced that the successful implementation of that plan would give hope for that conflict to be brought under control and leave space for a political and diplomatic settlement. It is time to promote the establishment of as wide a platform as possible so as to reach, through multilateral negotiations, a political solution that will make it possible to restore peace and stability in Syria.

With respect to pressing problems in the context of contemporary international security, I would like to draw attention to the issue of cybersecurity, which is becoming increasingly important given the development of the information society. Ukraine attaches great significance to that issue as well as to the development of up-to-date mechanisms to combat cybercrimes.

We believe that we should focus on strengthening control over the use of the Internet and cyberspace for criminal purposes and for other dangerous, primarily military ends. I am convinced that this process should be led by the United Nations. The United Nations is the best instrument for transforming the Internet into a space of freedom that works in the interests and to the benefit of all nations throughout the world.

I believe that it is within our power to make the world safer. The ideals of peace and the peaceful coexistence of nations are not hollow words for Ukraine but a clear guideline that has informed all of our actions on the international stage since we became independent. That imperative is at the heart of every step and initiative taken by our country in the world arena. The fact that this year Ukraine holds the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)—the largest international regional forum—is a vivid example of that commitment. It is an honour for us, and we view our responsible mission primarily as a mechanism for the consolidation of security and stability in Europe.

The Ukrainian chairmanship focuses in particular on the settlement of protracted conflicts and the resumption of control over conventional weapons within the OSCE area, the combat against trafficking in human beings and other very pressing issues on the Organization's agenda. I wish to underline that in every sector I have mentioned, some limited but practically meaningful progress has been achieved.

Ukraine has also been able to give added urgency to the issues of energy security and environmental safety issues for the OSCE and take the issue of energy efficiency to a new level. I am confident that the successful realization of the priorities of the Ukrainian chairmanship will allow for the intensifying of cooperation between the United Nations and the OSCE.

The year 2014 will mark the twentieth anniversary of Ukraine's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as a non-nuclear-weapon State. By ridding the world of its third-largest nuclear arsenal, our country made an unprecedented contribution to global nuclear disarmament. It was at that time that Ukraine, the Russian Federation, Great Britain and the United States concluded the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances, joined later by France and China.

In view of the historical significance of those events and considering the recent alarming trends in nuclear proliferation, Ukraine will initiate the holding, at the current session of the General Assembly, of a thematic conference. We expect that guarantor States, countries that followed Ukraine's example and other interested parties will participate. I hope that this international event will be a good opportunity to come back to the issue of negative security assurances and give it thorough consideration.

We stress that security assurances for those States that gave up their nuclear arsenals and countries that are not part of military unions must be reflected in a legally binding international document.

We look forward to the holding of a successful Nuclear Security Summit in The Hague next year. Ukraine looks to that global forum to produce new qualitative outcomes and encourages all other countries to make appropriate contributions to that cause.

Ukraine, as a maritime State, deploys continuing efforts to secure maritime navigation safety and to combat piracy at sea. The primary task in that field is to reinforce the efficacy of mechanisms for the prosecution of those guilty of perpetrating and financing piracy.

We will further contribute to the strengthening of peace through our active participation in United Nations missions in hotspots throughout the world. In its more than 20 years of participation in peacekeeping activities under the auspices of the United Nations, Ukraine has contributed to more than 20 such operations. Today its agenda includes the consolidation and expansion of that experience in the context of the United Nations missions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Côte d'Ivoire.

At the same time, we cannot but take note of the existing problems with respect to the current peacekeeping activities of our Organization. Along with other countries that are contributors of Blue Helmets, we will continue to work to solve them, particularly as regards ensuring the mobility and safety of air operations as well as the legal protection of peacekeepers and the investigation of crimes committed against them.

Ukraine will make further significant practical contributions aimed at making the world safer. To that end, we will use all available instruments, especially non-permanent membership in the Security Council if our country is elected to that body for the period 2016-2017. I count on support for the candidacy of Ukraine in those elections.

Our country is fully committed to the collective security system enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. The system, which has proved indispensable, will remain the foundation of the world order.

Ukraine upholds President Ashe's decisive determination to achieve long-expected practical advances in the reform of the United Nations. We believe that it is critically important to achieve early

progress in the modernization of the Security Council. We have great concern about the present stagnancy of the process.

I would like to confirm once again the readiness of Ukraine to discuss all progressive concepts related to Security Council reform that could accelerate the implementation of the long-overdue changes. We consider that such reform must take into account the legitimate interests of all regional groups, including the Eastern European group. The countries of our region should be allocated one additional non-permanent seat in an enlarged Security Council.

All preconditions have been met for the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly to go down in history as one of the most fruitful in terms of the work of the United Nations, a key political body that is the most representative of all world organizations. I am firmly convinced that the community of nations is up to the task.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Ukraine for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Viktor Yanukovich, President of Ukraine, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Rajapaksa: At the outset, I offer my condolences to the families whose loved ones died as a result of the terrorist attack on a shopping mall in Kenya. Having suffered many terrorist attacks over nearly three decades, we Sri Lankans condemn this cowardly act.

The United Nations has consistently ensured cooperation among States and provided a universal

platform for discussions on a range of issues, contentious or otherwise. It is imperative that we jealously protect and abide by the principle of equal treatment of countries that has been the very basis of this global Organization. Be it on economic or political issues, equality must form the bedrock of all international interactions.

Reflecting on the work of the United Nations, we note that matters of a political nature have overridden the most basic issues that affect the underprivileged and marginalized who make up the majority of world society. The commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) brought about a real sense of optimism. The theme for this session is timely, as progress in the MDGs should be evaluated, with their deadline fast approaching.

Appreciable progress has been made in the MDGs, although the results are uneven among and within countries. According to World Bank projections, by 2015 sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia will be home to approximately 40 per cent of the developing world's population living in extreme poverty. This diminishes our sense of optimism. It is fitting for the United Nations system to examine the causes of the failure in improving the lot of the deprived.

In the context of Sri Lanka, my vision has been to distribute the benefits of growth across all segments of the population and to prevent inequalities, social exclusion and adverse environmental effects. The socioeconomic achievements in my country are the result of people-centric Government policies.

Despite the fact that my country has had to contend with one of the most ruthless terrorist groups in the world, the 2004 tsunami and the global food, energy and financial crises, Sri Lanka's attainment of the MDGs is exemplary. The statistics speak for themselves. Sri Lanka was ranked ninety-second out of 187 countries in the 2012 Human Development Index. Absolute poverty in Sri Lanka declined to 6.5 per cent in 2012 from 15.2 per cent over a period of five years, surpassing the MDG mid-term target.

The goal of universal primary education will be easily achieved by 2015. The key dividend from this strong educational infrastructure has been a drastic reduction in the unemployment level. Sri Lanka's accomplishments in health care include an infant mortality rate of 9.4 per 1,000 live births, highlighted by UNICEF as a success story.

Sri Lanka's sense of pride in our early recognition of the crucial role women play in political and socioeconomic development is amply warranted, as we elected the world's first female Prime Minister, the late Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike. Sri Lanka was ranked sixteenth in the *Global Gender Gap Report 2010*.

Sri Lanka has mainstreamed the issue of youth in its post-2015 development agenda and is at the forefront of international efforts advocating the interests of youth. Sri Lanka will be hosting the Commonwealth Youth Forum 2013 in November and the United Nations World Conference on Youth in May 2014. I take this opportunity to extend an invitation to all Member States to join in celebrating youth at the World Conference.

I also call upon the United Nations to declare an international skills day as recognition of the way in which skills development for youth paves the way for reduced poverty. An innovative development has been the establishment of a Youth Parliament to sharpen the awareness of democracy and skills among the new generation and prepare them to assume leadership.

It is of the utmost importance that Member States individually decide on their own means to achieve the MDGs. The unique sociocultural practices and traditions of countries should be taken into account when designing these processes.

The post-2015 development agenda needs to be an intergovernmental process, in line with the outcomes and agreed principles of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). Centuries of growth in advanced economies have left little carbon space for the developing world, thus challenging their growth. The thin line on which economic development and protection of the environment must be balanced will remain a great challenge in future development policy-setting. It is therefore critical that developed countries honour their commitments and compensate for their damage to the environment on the basis of common but differentiated responsibilities.

The eradication of poverty must be the primary goal of the post-2015 development agenda and must promote accelerated economic growth in developing countries. Ensuring sustainable growth with social equity demands a balanced approach to development. High rates of investment, efforts to strengthen the quality of human capital and technology transfers are crucial for sustainable growth.

The mechanisms on financing and technology mandated by Rio+20 need to be urgently implemented. The sustainable development financing strategy, in its formulation, must seek to provide for enhanced and predictable financial support to developing countries. Sri Lanka supports the establishment of a technology facilitation mechanism under the United Nations, recommended in the Secretary-General's report (A/67/348). The mighty advocates of rights-based approaches should also honour their international commitments relating to development financing.

Calls for reforms in the current international financial institutions continue to be relevant. Their ad hoc policies have proven to be untenable in the long run. It is imperative for the international monetary and financial institutions to give expression to the solid voice of the developing world. Also, those countries that are economically blessed must shed their practice of leveraging through those institutions. A comprehensive structural reform of the existing imperfect global economic order needs to be fully addressed to reflect current realities.

The world is in need of a fair international economic system to revitalize partnerships for development. That includes State and non-State actors and blue chip companies emerging as new partners. Moreover, South-South cooperation is crucial due to the shift in economic power and should be actively promoted to complement North-South cooperation.

It is disturbing to observe the growing trend in the international arena of interference by some in the internal matters of developing countries in the guise of ensuring security and guarding human rights. Therefore, we continue to witness agitation the world over, leading to violence and forcing political change accompanied by turmoil. It is time to contemplate whether such movements have led to better stability in those countries or produced different results due to inappropriate external factors. In fact, the positive outcomes envisaged by those responsible have not come to pass, but indeed contributed to making those countries unstable. Do unilateral or group actions not erode the authority of the Security Council?

That trend needs to be arrested, as it has now extended into areas where it is detrimental to the well-being of populations. The turmoil results from attempts to impose a type of democracy upon countries with significantly different cultures, values and history. The

world needs no policing by a few States, particularly when the United Nations is mandated to ensure international security through multilateral engagement. That engagement, to be complete in our time, must ensure the protection of the human race against the flagrant abuse of modern science in such forms as nuclear and chemical weapons.

Deepening uncertainties in the Middle East are disturbing. We await the coexistence of Palestine and Israel on the basis of pre-1967 borders. Sri Lanka looks forward to welcoming Palestine as a full Member of the United Nations.

We salute the people of Africa in their efforts to achieve better living conditions and economic prosperity. Sri Lanka continues to demonstrate solidarity with the African people in their pursuit of further socioeconomic growth.

Unilateral measures, such as embargoes and economic sanctions imposed on countries, are disturbing. Such initiatives bring suffering not only to those specifically targeted, but to a wide range of humankind without any justification. Yet again, I stand in support of the people of Cuba in overcoming economic hardships and in gaining full access to economic opportunity.

Permit me to address briefly the post-conflict developments in my own country. I am proud that Sri Lanka has eradicated separatist terrorism spanning three decades and is in the process of addressing the issues of development and reconciliation. Sri Lanka's Government, at all times responsive to the priorities reflected in public opinion, is engaged in all measures required for meaningful progress in those fields.

A significant event in that regard was the opportunity that the people of Northern province enjoyed at the elections, held three days ago, to elect their representatives in the provincial council. It is a matter of legitimate satisfaction to me that this was made possible after the lapse of almost a quarter of a century. There can be no doubt regarding the crucial importance of that measure in the context of political empowerment and reconciliation. It is clearly the responsibility of the international community to assist with those efforts and to ensure their success for the benefit of all the people of Sri Lanka.

In spite of the visible progress made and consistent engagement with United Nations mechanisms, many countries are surprised at the disproportionate

emphasis on Sri Lanka and its unequal treatment in the multilateral framework. The basis for that relentless pursuit is also questioned. It is my conviction that the United Nations system should be astute in ensuring the consistency of standards applied so that there is no room for suspicion of manipulation of the United Nations system by interested parties to fulfil their agendas.

By nature, human beings have the capacity to achieve the most challenging and noble goals in life through strong commitment and dedication. I am confident that, by our own collective efforts, those results will prove to be beneficial to all humankind. As Buddha, the Enlightened One, said, "*Atta hi attano*

natho" — "You are your own master." Let those timeless words of wisdom guide the destiny of the world. May the Noble Triple Gem bless us all.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The meeting rose at 3.40 p.m.